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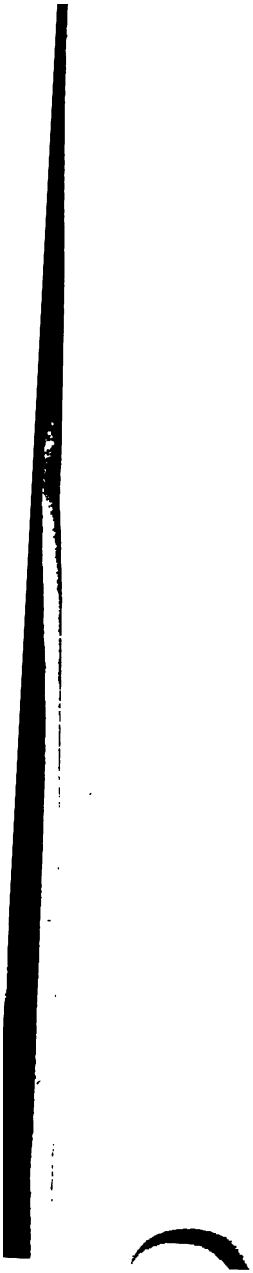

MONEY'S WORTH.

A Novel,

IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE BOOKS.

BY TOM HOOD,

AUTHOR OF "A GOLDEN HEART," "A LOST LINK," "CAPTAIN MASTERS'S CHILDREN," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIII.	THE LOVELY LEONTINE IN A NEW CHARACTER	5
XIV.	ANOTHER MOVE	22

THE THIRD BOOK—CONTENT.

I.	"DOTH NOT A MEETING LIKE THIS MAKE AMENDS?"	43
II.	A CHANGE IN THE BILL AT THE DROMUS	59
III.	SOWING THE WIND	75
IV.	MOGRIDGE MANAGES TO "SQUARE IT"	92
V.	"EMPLOYMENT FOR THE GENTLEMEN OF THE LONG ROBE"	106
VI.	HASSARD ONCE MORE ON THE WING	123
VII.	REAPING THE WHIRLWIND	138
VIII.	LANCELOT'S LABOUR LOST	173
IX.	"RUBBED OUT!"	188
X.	EXIT CHANTICLEER!	202
XI.	A HOMERIC STRUGGLE	218
XII.	LANCELOT LOOKS EASTWARD	230
XIII.	IN WHICH SCARDRAKE FAILS TO RECOGNIZE ESTHER	246
XIV.	IN WHICH LANCELOT SIGHTS THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.	262
XV.	IN WHICH LANCELOT IS LEFT AT WORK	282

MONEY'S WORTH.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOVELY LEONTINE IN A NEW CHARACTER.

In the afternoon of the eventful day when he and Elwin met again at the Leicester Theatre, old Scardrake felt so unsettled, that, finding it utterly impossible to apply himself to business, he went home to Brixton, to the no small astonishment of Esther, who had become accustomed by this time to his stopping away until late in the evening.

There had been, as has been recorded in previous chapters, a coolness between Esther and her father; and the breach widened day by day, until he found his home so distasteful that he spent his evenings, as a rule, at his club or at the theatre. This was a pleasant enough arrangement for him, but it did not conduce much

to Esther's happiness. It was true that she and her father had few sympathies nowadays, but his company was, nevertheless, better than none at all. In the solitude of the long evenings she had nothing to divert her thoughts from the past, and the memories which came crowding back again, like so many ghosts, in the long silence of the gloaming, were bitter and disquieting. She could not still the voice of self-accusation, and she could not shut the eyes of conscience against the vivid picture of a dying woman's face—the face of the rival whom she had as surely killed as if she had struck the knife into her heart actually, instead of metaphorically.

So Esther, weary of her long solitary evenings, was no less pleased, perhaps, than astonished at her father's early return home. She received him graciously—more graciously than was her wont. As for Scardrake, he was so full of the strange event of the day that the coldest reception would not have prevented his telling her all that had happened.

He did not forget to dwell on the abject state to which Elwin was reduced, nor did he omit to declare with many a solemn oath his determination to hunt his victim down.

Scardrake's desire for revenge had been

rendered more acute by the frequent rebuffs and disappointments he had encountered. They had intensified his fury, and given to his pursuit of vengeance the keenness and zest, which to man—essentially a "hunting animal," let Mr. Freeman argue as long as he pleases—become so much the more delightful the longer and more arduous the chase.

But with Esther the case was different. Her first thirst for revenge was strongly imbued with jealousy; and she had drunk deeply—darkly, of the cup of vengeance—even to the bitter lees! The feeling inspired by disappointed love, by a sense of wrong and treachery, was vindictive, not implacable. Now when the man, whom she would have slain in the first outburst of her wounded pride and disappointed love, was brought to the dust, the ashes of her heart were warm again with a spark of the old fire—only a tiny spark of pity, it is true, but yet a relic of the bygone affection.

She was too proud, however, to let even her father see that the man who had deceived her had still the power to stir her sympathy. But inwardly she rebelled against her father's desire to crush the unhappy, broken-down wretch altogether. What wrong had Herbert Elwin

done to him, compared with the wrong he had done to her, that where she could forgive, he should be so unrelenting? But she said not a word, partly from pride, as I have said; and partly because she knew her father too well to dream that any intercession of hers could prevail with him now. At one time a word would have sufficed from her; but since then their paths had diverged, her influence was lost for ever. None fight more desperately than deserters—none are so pertinacious in denouncing their late faith as converts. In the same way, none differ so widely or so obstinately as *quondam* friends, between whom the bond of sympathy, that once seemed indivisible as the link that connects the Siamese Twins, has been snapped by a careless word or a random deed!

Scardrake, however, did not suspect the change in his daughter's feelings on this question, and made no attempt to conceal the steps he had taken to secure Elwin, by putting the detectives on his trail, with the intention of accusing him of an attempt to burn the theatre.

For several weeks after this—as long, in short, as Scardrake employed the detectives—Esther was in constant anxiety. Day after day she inquired of her father if there was

any trace of the fugitive. He used to smile at her eagerness, believing that she shared his desire for vengeance—as a beast of prey looks on with satisfaction whilst its young ones display the first evidence of their innate ferocity.

But day after day went by, and the detectives were still at fault. Esther could scarcely analyze her state of mind; for, while she wished him to escape, she felt a sort of vague longing to see once again the man who had been so large a part of her life, who had filled her past with dreams and sad recollections, and had darkened her future with despair and disappointment.

She grew utterly weary of her home now. The elegant villa at Brixton had too many memories of the old times. She longed to get away from it, and its sad associations. She begged her father to let her go back to Spincaster, where she had spent her childhood. Scardrake had still retained an estate there, situated a short distance out of the town. It had been part of his wife's property, and he had kept it, because he believed that, though only a small and not very valuable estate to begin with, it would become a place of worth and importance when Spincaster, with a rapidly-increasing population, growing prosperity, and an improving trade, should have so far ex-

tended as to make the estate desirable for building purposes.

It was convenient too; for as he still had some irons in the fire at Spincaster, it was necessary for him to go down there sometimes, and he found the old house a pleasant enough place to stay in while he was transacting his business. He was so universally hated in Spincaster, that to stay at an hotel, or spend an hour more than was absolutely necessary in the town, would have subjected him to many unpleasantnesses. He was not over-sensitive, but a man must have a moral epidermis as thick as a rhinoceros-hide not to wince when he finds himself shunned as if he were a walking pestilence—and in Spincaster Scardrake was thus shunned by all save those whose misfortune it was to be compelled to do business with him.

Now, although under these circumstances he found the old house, situated as it was a little distance from Spincaster, a very welcome retreat when he was obliged to go there, Scardrake did not feel much inclined to take up a permanent abode in the immediate vicinity of a town where he was beyond all question the best-hated person in existence.

So when Esther begged of him to give up

the Brixton villa and retire to Spincaster, he resolutely set his face against the proposition. She was young yet, he declared, and he hoped to see her married and settled before long, and it would not be a good way of bringing about that desirable consummation to bury her in an out-of-the-way country house. Esther declared that she should never marry. Her father pooh-poohed the notion. She urged that at any rate there was as much chance of her finding a husband in a large place like Spincaster, as anywhere else, to which Scardrake replied, with a very strong asseveration, that nobody there was likely to marry her. As Esther had not been at Spincaster since she was quite a girl, and therefore was ignorant of her father's unpopularity there—to put as mildly as possible the state of feeling towards him in that locality—she was a little at a loss to account for the very violent way in which the matrimonial chances of Spincaster were denounced. However, she saw it was of no use urging the point any further just then, and so let the subject drop, hoping for a more favourable opportunity for repeating the request.

Scardrake dismissed the subject too, thinking it was only a passing whim. He was so full of the lawsuit in which he was engaged with

Moss on behalf of the Lovely Leontine that he had little thought for anything else.

He was not a little furious when he discovered that Captain Hassard had given him the slip. He learnt the fact from Mrs. Hassard. That flabby-minded lady, as soon as she was compelled to acknowledge to herself that the Captain had again deserted her, thought it would be rather clever than otherwise to write to Scardrake and tell him, appealing to his mercy not to ruin her by prosecuting the cause, and seizing the few poor things which constituted her all!

Of course, her appeal was useless. Scardrake, thinking that he might be able to turn her weakness to advantage, pretended to be very sorry for her, and promised to assist her. But, he assured her, in this business he was not the leading actor—Mr. Moss was really engaged, and it was he who was conducting the case. All that he, Scardrake, could do was to endeavour to mollify Mrs. Clayter, and obtain easy terms after the case was decided. Failing that, he would do his best to assist Mrs. Hassard out of the difficulty. Mrs. Hassard was too weak-minded not to be imposed on by these pretended offers of aid, and even went so far as to call on Scardrake, who satisfied

himself by a very few questions that she really knew nothing of the Captain's whereabouts, intentions, or movements. However, he consoled himself with the reflection that, after all, it was not the Captain whom he had such a grudge against, but his rival, Lancelot Oldham, and Violet, whom he longed to humble as she had humiliated him.

As a matter of course, when he next saw the Lovely Leontine, he told her of the Captain's disappearance. But he did not say anything about Lancelot—indeed, she would not allow him, for she was furious at the Captain's escape, and rated Scardrake soundly for letting him slip through his fingers. Altogether, she was so disagreeable, that he was glad to bring the interview to a speedy close, merely assuring her that there was every hope of catching the Captain before long. He knew this was not true, but he thought it would pacify her.

But the Lovely Leontine knew the Captain better than old Scardrake supposed, and she felt that he was too old a campaigner to be so easily caught when he had once given them the slip.

She called the next day on Jerusha Moss, and gave him a sound rating too. He was not acquainted, as Scardrake was, with her

motives in seeking to establish her claims to the Clayter estate; so he frankly confessed that he thought she would hardly care to press her case now that the money was gone, and the only redress she could claim was from the trustees, who were men of straw.

"Why this Captain Hassard, ma'am," said Moss, "isn't worth a penny. You can sell him up, and that's all. His furniture's new, it's true; but a sale never brings in anything like the price things cost, however new they may be. As to the other fellow, Oldham, he's only a newspaper fellow—a penny-a-liner, or something of that sort."

"Oldham!" said the Leontine; "what is his Christian name?"

Moss referred to the papers, and informed her it was Lancelot.

"Lancelot Oldham!" said she, musingly; "it must be the same. I wonder if Scardrake knows. Mr. Moss," she added, suddenly, "take no more steps in this matter till you hear from me. I am inclined to think what you said is true, and that it is needless expense to pursue a shadow. If ever this Hassard turns up again, we can always revive the action, I suppose?"

She did not wait for an answer to this ques-

tion—did not even bid Jerusha "Good day," but hurried downstairs, and ordered her coachman to drive straight to Scardrake's. He was out, the clerks said, and one of them expressed his belief that he would not return to the office that day.

"Do you think he has gone home?" inquired the lady. The clerk supposed he had. Old Scardrake purposely kept his clerks in ignorance of his habits and movements as much as possible, in the belief that their uncertainty about him would keep them in awe, and prevent them from wasting their time, or playing truant.

Merely waiting to ascertain the address at Brixton, the Lovely Leontine hurried out of the office and bade her coachman drive to Scardrake's private residence.

Scardrake was not at home, to her great disappointment. She inquired when he was expected, and the answer was that he was uncertain.

She was just about to drive off, when a thought seemed suddenly to strike her.

"Is Miss Scardrake at home?" she asked.

The footman replied in the affirmative.

Without more ado she got out of the brougham, and before the astonished servant

could open his mouth, had walked past him into the hall.

"Show me into a room, and tell Miss Scardrake a lady wishes to see her particularly!"

The footman obeyed somewhat reluctantly. He was a little afraid of the effect of such an announcement on Esther's temper, for she seldom saw callers, and was, as a rule, denied to strangers especially.

"Did she give no name—no card?" asked Esther, when, with fear and trembling, he had conveyed the message.

"No, ma'am; she said you wouldn't know it"—which was a fiction, as we are aware; but it seemed the only way out of the difficulty, so he adopted it in sheer desperation.

Esther was annoyed, but she determined to see her mysterious visitor. So she sailed into the drawing-room with dignity, and gave the Lovely Leontine a distant and freezing bow.

"To what do I owe this visit, madam?" she asked, motioning the other to be seated, but remaining standing herself, as a hint that the interview must be a brief one.

Her visitor did not answer for some time, and did not heed the invitation to be seated. She stood gazing earnestly at Esther, who began

to feel not quite comfortable in undergoing such a close scrutiny.

"You are Miss Scardrake?" said her visitor, not without a trace of agitation in her voice.

"I am."

"Esther—that is your Christian name, is it not? Yes, Esther!" said the stranger, repeating the word, as if there was some tender association in the sound.

Esther did not speak, for she was wondering who her visitor was, and how she came to know her name.

"You do not remember your mother?" asked the other.

"She died when I was very young," said Esther.

"Who told you so? Did he tell you so?"

"My father said so!"

"It was a lie, then!" said the other, fiercely.

"Madam!" said Esther, with some severity. She fancied her visitor must be mad, and moved towards the bell.

"It was a lie—a wicked lie! Your father's wife died, it is true—but not your mother."

"I do not understand you, madam!" said Esther, laying her hand on the bell.

But before she could ring, the other stopped her, and flinging her arms round her, with a

sudden burst of tears, exclaimed, "Esther—Esther, *I* am your mother!"

Esther was completely taken by surprise, and sank speechless on the sofa; while the other falling on her knees at her feet, half hid her face in Esther's lap, and with sobs, and tears, and in broken accents told the story of her betrayal and of her abandonment of her child.

Esther, though at a loss what to do, and uncertain whether to believe or disbelieve, had enough of the woman in her nature to weep from sympathy, while the other poured forth her regrets and reproaches.

"I have been deceived and wronged, all my life. I have no friend in the world—no one to love me, if you refuse!" sobbed the mother. Esther could not resist the appeal, and had just flung her arms round the Lovely Leontine's neck, when the door opened suddenly and Scardrake entered.

It appeared that he and the Lovely Leontine had crossed each other, for he was going from his office to Moss's, as she drove from Moss's office to his. When he learnt from Jerusha that she had ordered him to stay the proceedings, and had expressed an intention of consulting him, he hastened back to his own chambers, to

learn that Miss Leontine had called there, and had gone away with the intention of looking for him at Brixton.

The moment he entered the room he divined what had taken place, and he was anything but pleased. He had calculated on the mother's long separation from Esther, and supposed that not even the tiniest spark of the maternal instinct had survived. He had given the Lovely Leontine credit for self-command and common sense enough to make her refrain from reviving the past. And, indeed, he might have relied on her, for she had had no intention of revealing her relation to Esther; but she had been worried and upset of late, and her nerves were shaken. Her interview with Moss had recalled old times to her memory, and the sight of Esther, and the feeling that, lonely as she was, she had a claim on her daughter's affection, had overcome her resolution.

In his anger, Scardrake said enough to convince Esther of the truth of the story to which she had been listening in doubt. She, too, felt lonely and miserable; and there came a new and strange sense of comfort with the knowledge of a mother's sympathy and love. She clung to her instinctively; Scardrake saw it, and it did not make him more amiable. Angry

words and cruel charges were exchanged, until Esther interposed as peacemaker.

Then Scardrake remembered the reason of his coming, and asked why Moss had been instructed to stay proceedings.

"Because I believe that Lancelot Oldham, whom you would crush by them, is my sister's child. Is that not so?"

But Scardrake declared he did not know; and to do him justice, I believe he was in ignorance of the relationship. At any rate, he did not withhold the address, though possibly he felt that, as Esther knew where Mrs. Hassard lived, his refusal would only delay, and not prevent, the inquiry which the Lovely Leontine, of many *aliases*, desired to institute.

When her mother rose to go, Esther—to Scardrake's rage and disappointment — announced her intention of accompanying her. It was in vain that he threatened and implored —not so much from affection as from the wish to avoid the scandal to which Esther's determination would lead; the mother and daughter seemed anxious to make up by the fervour of their attachment now for the long years of their separation.

When they were gone, Scardrake felt a sense of desolation so new, so strange, and so over-

powering, that he was fairly unmanned. And indeed, though one cannot sympathize with the old villain, it is impossible to avoid feeling some sort of pity for him, when one sees him thus deserted, amid the wreck of his cherished schemes, and in the bitterness of disappointed revenge.

"I give it up! It's no use fighting!" he said to himself savagely; "the best thing I can do is to crawl away to some hole where no one knows me—and die!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER MOVE.

THE ceaseless worry and terror in which Lancelot now lived, with the threats of Moss and Scardrake constantly hanging over his head, told upon him seriously. He had not explained to Violet the full extent of his liability, for he wanted the courage to blight her young and hopeful life with so dark and apparently so hopeless an out-look.

But he brooded over his trouble, alone and in secret, until he almost persuaded himself that the world was right, and he was wrong; that he should not have linked Violet's fate with his by marrying her on his slender and uncertain income. It was his love that blinded him to the truth, but he was none the less on that account a traitor to his wife! He forgot that the loving woman would sooner share the struggles—nay, the poverty—of the man she loves, than wait until he can offer her the calm

haven of an assured independence, where her love will never be proved by adversity. A woman's nature is such that she never can feel that her love is proved worthy until it has passed through the fiery furnace of tribulation. In short, to man, love means admiration, pride, emulation—a host of things! To a woman, it means simply sacrifice. To her, to love is to give, to submit, to suffer for the beloved. To him, it is to win, to achieve, to conquer for the beloved. In plainer terms, woman's love is the abnegation — man's the glorification — of self!

Lancelot brooded over his trouble, and became so impressed with the wrong he had done Violet, that he felt absolute pain in her presence. Her loving words, her tender caresses seemed to stab him! It was an unreasonable sensibility—a morbid feeling—but he could not shake it off; and it made him not only wretched, but weak. It incapacitated him for work—as the harass of Moss and Scardrake's persecution might well have done alone. Combined with this self-upbraiding, their persecution prostrated him; for at home, where he should have found comfort, and respite, and consolation, he found only deeper cause for bitter remorse and self-reproach.

Unfortunately the luxury of private grief, in personal cases, is one denied to the journalist, as it is to the actor. It would never do, of course, to allow Clown to wash little rivulet-courses in his bismuth, because his wife is lying dead at home; Pantaloon must bear his buffets with a smiling face, though his children want bread, and he can see no prospect but a workhouse—or a suicide's grave when the pantomime season is at an end! In the same way, the proprietor of *The Cockcrow* could not excuse Lancelot if his leaders wanted brightness, or his reports failed in briskness, because the wolf or the bailiff seemed to be sitting at the front door of his humble home.

Heginbotham saw that Lancelot's pen began to lack its accustomed deftness, and he soon learnt that this failure had been noted by the higher powers. So he warned his friend, and by so doing only aggravated the evil.

"So they're beginning to complain of my work!" said Lancelot. "Well, I suppose I am written-out; and they will discharge me. I am so accustomed to ill-luck now, Heg, that I never expect anything else!"

"Pooh, my boy! Stuff and nonsense!" said old Heg, "I tell you it's all right. You're a little out of sorts, and you don't hit it

off in your work quite so happily as usual. Temporary derangement—possibly bile. Try Cockle!"

But Lancelot was too depressed to be roused by old Heg's mild chaff. It was as much as his friend could do to prevent him from sending in his resignation. He would rather do that, he said, than be dismissed; and as they complained he had better go. But Heginbotham contrived to dissuade him from this suicidal act, by setting forth that as he, Heginbotham, had informed him of the opinion of the authorities, which was expressed in strict confidence, he would get into serious disgrace, if Lancelot, by acting on what he had told him, proved that he (Heg) had broken faith with them.

Lancelot admitted the justice of this, and promised not to get Heginbotham into a scrape. But he went away with the dismal conviction that he was likely to lose his post on the paper.

The effect on his spirits was the reverse of cheerful, and he could no longer conceal the anxiety he felt from the watchful eyes of Violet. She pressed him for an explanation of its cause, and by degrees prevailed on him to tell her all his trouble. But when he wound it all up by reproaching himself for dragging her down

to privation and distress, she put her hand before his mouth, and playfully forbade him to speak more. She assumed a cheerful air, for she saw that if he was not roused from his dejection, he would worry himself into a serious illness.

"My dear Lancelot, you must have been dreaming that you have married a Peeress! Dragging me down to want! Why, I never knew anything else. Was not I a poor struggling governess—with a home where I was not happy? Don't you think, dear, that I would sooner—ah, far sooner, share your lot, with all its cares and anxieties, than have all that miserable money of my aunt's, without you? A wife is not what Mr. Heginbotham calls 'a fair-weather friend,' to stay with you only while there is sunshine. You do me an injustice when you conceal your cares from me, for you deprive me of my right to try to cheer and comfort you. Let us look at these troubles together, and see how they are to be met!"

Lancelot felt his courage revive when he saw how bravely Violet could face the difficulties which had so unnerved him.

"We must not spend a penny more than we can help," said Violet, with a woman's readiness to practise small economies, "and lay by

what we can for the rainy day. But we'll not believe it is coming, for all that."

"There will be no escaping it, Violet. I know old Scardrake, and that old harpy, Moss, too well not to know they will have their pound of flesh if they cannot get their pound of money; and, as your father has got out of the way, the whole of their vengeance will fall on my devoted head!"

"Well, cannot we undertake to pay it back by degrees? We must have my mother to live with us, and realize all we can by the sale of the things at Norwood. They ought to bring in a handsome sum—they cost enough, in all conscience! That would be something as a first instalment."

"My dear Violet, you ought to know, from your own experience of the low prices we gave in our happy furniture-hunting days, that when once a thing becomes 'second hand'—though it has scarcely been used at all—its value is diminished immensely."

"I think we ought to give up this house, and go into lodgings, or try and look about for something cheaper," said Violet.

As they talked the matter over thus, it seemed to Lancelot that the horizon was already becoming brighter. How true is it that

the hardest grief to bear is the grief without community—

> "For as ale and porter when flat are restored,
> Till a sparkling, bubbling head they afford,
> So sorrow is cheered by being poured
> From one vessel into another."

Lancelot went back to his work in better spirits, and as a natural consequence he wrote with his old vigour. Now it so chanced that the fat and providentially bald-headed little man who edited *The Cockcrow* had been doing what he considered a clever stroke of diplomacy. He had seen that Lancelot's work was flagging, and yet he did not want to take official note of it, though he wished to give him a hint on the subject. So he artfully complained to Heginbotham, whose partiality for Lancelot he well knew, and whom he requested not to mention what he had said. He felt perfectly certain that, as a matter of friendship, Heg would give Lancelot a private warning, and so the editorial object would be attained without a row, and without trouble. When he saw that Lancelot seemed to have recovered his old style, he flattered himself that his artful bit of diplomacy had been eminently successful. He did not know that really it had nothing to do with the improvement. But he determined

to efface all traces of the warning he had so ingeniously conveyed to Lancelot, and took an early opportunity of complimenting him on his work.

"The chief has been complimenting me, Heg! Are you quite sure there was no mistake about what you told me?"

"Not a bit, dear boy," said Heg, who had the measure of his editor very accurately; "it's his blarney. He fancied I might have told you what he said, and he wished to remove the impression. And, by Jove, you seem to have whipped up your style again, my boy. I told you it was only liver."

"No, Heg! It wasn't physical derangement—it was a mental ill," said Lancelot; and then he told his friend the anxieties and troubles under which he laboured.

"Egad!" said Heg, "they're heavy enough to break a chap's courage down. Lancelot, my boy, you're a marvel! You only indulged in low spirits where nine fellows in ten would have taken to ardent ones! And what do you propose to do?"

Lancelot explained the plans of retrenchment, which Violet and he had discussed, and among other things their intention of taking a cheaper house.

"I'll tell you what will just suit you, dear boy," said Heginbotham; "there's a little colony of pretty cottages in Beckenham, along the Chatham and Dover. It's a pleasant situation, and the rents are low. They're small, but there's only you two."

Lancelot liked the idea, but thought it was a little too far from town. Heginbotham, however, told him that the fares were low, and that there were late trains if he happeued to be detained in town.

"I'll tell you who lived there," said Heginbotham; "Tim O'Meara, while he was working on the *Daily Informant*, before he got that appointment in Dublin; and if *he* could manage it, *you* can."

Lancelot propounded the notion to Violet the same evening, and she seemed to approve of it. It was agreed that they would go down and see the colony on the Saturday afternoon, which was Lancelot's half-holiday.

The Saturday came, and was obliging enough to be warm and sunny. The young couple felt it was like one of the house-and-furniture-hunting days that had been so happy before their marriage.

They had no difficulty in finding the object of their visit. It was a village—one might

almost say a small town—lying close beside the railway. There were green lanes and green fields about it. In one direction lay the Crystal Palace, with its richly-wooded grounds, shutting out London and its pall of smoke; on the other side, the beautiful Kentish hills stretched away into the far distance, beyond the quaint spire of Beckenham church, whose bells were, it so chanced, ringing a pleasant peal, as if to bid the young couple welcome.

Violet was delighted with the scene, and went into raptures over the neat little houses, with their tiny gardens so carefully kept, and so bright with flowers, which did not know what it was to be rendered sickly and drooping with the all-pervading smoke of a big town, like their less fortunate relations in London.

"Oh, wouldn't it be delightful to have a garden like that, Lancelot? Look, there are potatoes in that little bit at the back—fancy our growing our very own real potatoes!" and she clapped her hands with delight like a child.

"Very jolly indeed," said Lancelot, laughing at her eager joy, "if we either of us happened to know enough of gardening to be able to grow our very own real potatoes—or even our very own real carnations, and wallflowers and hollyhocks."

"Oh, it's easy enough, Lancelot!" said Violet, seriously. "You have only to plant them, and they come up!"

"Well, my darling child, as you seem to know all about it, you shall be head-gardener, and look on and give the orders, and I'll be working gardener, and dig and do as you tell me. But you musn't discharge me if the things don't come up; and I think it would be as well to have potatoes from the greengrocer's till our own are fit to pick—or dig up, or whatever the technical term is!"

"I *have* grown mustard and cress," said Violet. "I grew it in a saucer, and it was beautiful!"

"Shall we try some potatoes in the same way?" said Lancelot.

"You shocking old Cockney!" said Violet.

So laughing and joking, they wandered through the colony looking for an empty cottage. They were not long in finding one which suited them. It stood at the extreme verge of the little village, with a green field next to it, full of daisies and buttercups that quite delighted Violet. From the upper windows they could see, a field or so off, a large pond, which Violet at once christened the Lake of Geneva, in memory of their honeymoon trip. So every-

thing was satisfactorily settled, the cottage was taken, and in due course they moved into it.

Before they did so, Violet went to her mother and offered her a home with them, and Mrs. Hassard, having no alternative, accepted the offer. But it was with no very good grace. And when she came down to the cottage she was by no means impressed by it as Violet had been. She declared it was much too small, and she didn't like the fields, and she wished there were not so many other cottages all about, and she pronounced it, on the whole, a very great derogation of dignity to live there.

Lancelot only laughed at her fancies, and Violet disregarded her grumbling. The cottage to them seemed a new and strange delight! There were such contrivances to be made, that Lancelot declared it was like having a large doll's house to fit up. If they had been arranging a palace there could hardly have been more pains taken. Not a nail was driven, not a peg put up, not a picture hung, without a grave consultation between Violet and Lancelot. Mrs. Hassard looked on, flapping her hands and protesting they were going out of their senses.

"If one ought not to make a toil of a pleasure," said Lancelot, speaking oracularly from

the top of a packing case resting on two chairs, that did duty as a ladder, "one can make a pleasure of a toil, Mrs. Hassard. We get a good deal of fun out of small materials; and as there is not too much of it in this world, and our share of it does not promise to be excessive, I think we are wise to make the most we can of it!"

But Mrs. Hassard did not appreciate this cheerful philosophy.

It was a Saturday afternoon, so that Lancelot had several hours before him to devote to his upholstery work. He was in the act of nailing up the muslin curtains when Heginbotham arrived. Old Heg was a pretty constant visitor on Saturdays, and whatever might be his failings on the other days of the week, he scrupulously kept sober on that day—at any rate until after his visit to the Oldhams. They made no stranger of him, so that Lancelot only stopped to shake hands with him, and then resumed his work.

"Is he getting handier with his hammer, Mrs. Oldham?" asked Heg—for Lancelot had expended a good deal of needless force on his knuckles now and then; "it's odd, now, that a man of his talent should be beaten by an ordinary tin-tack. Ah, these leader-writers, Mrs.

Oldham, to read their articles you would think they could turn their hands to anything, from ruling an empire to wielding a hammer—but now just see how awkward he is. I hope you don't let him put the nails in his mouth—I've known children choked in that way before now."

"Come, that's elegantly done, Heg, in spite of your chaff," said Lancelot, descending from his tottering eminence, and walking backwards to survey his handiwork.

"You havn't got an eye for a straight line. That left nail is two inches higher than the other," said Heg.

"Two fiddlesticks! Why, I measured them," retorted Lancelot.

"It must have been with a sliding scale! Come. I'll bet you what you like they are uneven!"

The contention was vigorously sustained. First Heg measured and said he was right. Then Lancelot measured and said *he* was right. So the dispute had not advanced much towards a settlement. Finally it was determined to refer it to arbitration, and Violet was called upon to decide.

Lancelot and Heg helped her up on the packing case, and supported her carefully while she took the measure.

While Heg and Lancelot were watching her in breathless silence, and she was taking the measure as exactly as if the fate of thousands depended on it, there came a tap at the door, which opened, and a strange voice inquired if Mr. Lancelot Oldham lived there!

They turned round and saw a lady, handsomely dressed, standing in the doorway. Violet, confused at being caught perched on a packing case, blushed and getting off the elevation hastily, assisted by her husband and Heginbotham, retired to the other room where her mother was sitting. Heginbotham followed her.

"I am Lancelot Oldham," said Lancelot, coming forward and handing his visitor a chair; "may I ask you your object in calling on me?"

"I am come to beg your pardon for a great deal of worry and anxiety which I must have caused you. I am Mrs. Clayter!"

Lancelot started. The name had not a pleasant sound in his ears.

"I see that my name is not a welcome one. But let me lose no time in making what reparation I can to you—you will hear no more about that wretched money!"

"Hear no more about it?" gasped Lancelot,

scarcely able to believe his ears. "May I ask the reason"——

"You may. I instituted these proceedings, not for the sake of the money, but to punish a man who had heartlessly deceived me."

"Captain Hassard!" asked Lancelot, involuntarily.

"Yes! I need not pain you with the history, as his daughter is your wife. Your mother has been dead many years?" she added, suddenly changing the subject.

Lancelot bowed his head.

"Do you remember her?"

"Very well!"

"Did she ever speak to you of her sister?" asked the lady, anxiously.

"Yes—just before her death."

"I am her sister—your aunt. Now you can understand why I have stayed my lawyers' hands, greedy as the harpies were."

Lancelot remembered all his mother had told him of her sister's unhappy career. His aunt divined his thoughts.

"Do not fear. I shall not trouble you, Lancelot, or darken your wife's path with my ill-omened shadow. I have but just recovered my daughter. She and I live for each other now; but for the sake of old times—for poor

Polly's sake, who was a mother rather than a sister to me, I wished to see you once. You are happy, I can see—may you long continue so. God bless you!"

Before he could recover himself sufficiently to speak, she had shaken him hurriedly by the hand, and was gone.

He followed, and overtook her as she was getting into her brougham. He begged her to come back and see his wife; but she refused obstinately, and all the concession she would make was to say he might call and see her at the theatre if he wished.

The next minute she was gone, and Lancelot came running back to the house with the good news.

I will leave my readers to guess with what joy it was received.

"Lancelot, my dear boy, I congratulate you —though I wish heartily, now, that you wouldn't have to give it up, that those scamps, Uvedale and Metford, could be made to disgorge."

"No, thank you!" said Lancelot, heartily, "we are better without it—are we not, Violet? We were happy enough till that wretched money came. We shall be happy without it, while I can work. Thank Heaven, say I, for taking that millstone of a legacy from our necks!"

"You're the only fellow that I'd believe when he said he was glad to lose so much cash!" said Heginbotham; "but I do believe you!"

"You may!—give me health and strength to work, Heg, in preference to a fortune. Give me content, and anybody who pleases may have the cash!"

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

THE THIRD BOOK—CONTENT.

"My crown is called content;
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy."

SHAKSPEARE, *3rd Part, Henry VI.*, Act iii. sc. 1.

CHAPTER I.

"DOTH NOT A MEETING LIKE THIS MAKE AMENDS?"

When Captain Hassard fled from the vengeance of the Lovely Leontine, he had, like our first parents, the world all before him where to choose his place of rest. But he made up his mind without long delay to return to America. He was, however, too wise to return to New York, for he remembered that he had been killed there; and he was fully aware that the most inconvenient thing that can happen to a man, next to being actually murdered, is to come to life unexpectedly. So with commendable prudence he determined to avoid the drawbacks inseparable from resuscitation, and to take up his abode in some other part of the States.

Chance, as much as anything else, led him to pitch upon Boston, and thither he directed his course. He had, with a foresight due to his selfishness, provided himself with all the ready

money he could conveniently lay hands upon, besides securing, less as mementoes than as convertible property, some of the most valuable of his wife's trinkets. Secured by these means against immediate pressure, he proposed to take up his abode at a boarding-house, and look about at his leisure for some gentlemanly and not too arduous occupation.

He kept up an appearance of independence which, he felt, would be the wisest course, with a view to his obtaining employment. Jack Hassard had not lived so many years in the world to be ignorant that if you want anything from anybody, the best way to get it is to seem not to want it. It is the way of the world—as of that coy dame Fortune, if the two things don't really amount to the same—to hold back when you press forward, to fly when you pursue. Stand still and affect indifference, and it will make advances to you—draw back and it will follow you. If you don't believe me, take the first opportunity that presents itself of looking on as a disinterested observer, when a situation is vacant, and watch the applicants; take my word for it, it will not be given to the eager fellow who is so anxious to get it, who is so sure he is exactly suited for it, who finds it is so precisely the thing he wants that salary is a

secondary consideration. No! It will be bestowed on the man who seems so careless about it, that it is almost too much trouble for him to call and inquire concerning it, who thinks that, perhaps, on the whole it might suit him, but would not care to bind himself down too closely, in case it should not. The really ripe golden pippins of prosperity do not fall to those who put themselves into a perspiration by persistently shaking the tree. They drop by some special clause in the law of gravity, at the feet of some passer-by, who, perhaps, has not even taken the trouble to look up and see what sort of a crop there is.

You will know the truth of this, if you have ever been looking about to find employment for some poor deserving fellow out of luck. You look about and make inquiries, you exert yourself, and press his case more urgently than you could your own. But all in vain! And while you are thus busying yourself, at every turn it crops up that just the very thing you are in search of has been given away but a few days or hours before to some one who possibly had not stirred five steps to seek it. "What a pity you didn't come last week," says A. "I could have given him a secretaryship. But young Brown has got it!" "Ah, you should have

applied for the clerkship that Jones got yesterday," says B. And C says, "I suppose you know Robinson has dropt in for the sub-editorship of the *Weekly Wangdoodle!*" And so on, until you are tired, and give up the quest in despair. Probably, as soon as that happens, the very thing you have been seeking drops into your lap. D calls on you, and in the course of conversation says, "By the bye, you don't happen to know of a young fellow who would undertake the post of librarian to the Kettle-menders' Company, do you?"

Captain Hassard had acquired by experience this philosophy, on which, considering its established truth, I have, perhaps, spent too much time in arguing. He did what the children do in a game, which seems a sort of infantine satire on life—he shut his eyes and opened his mouth, and trusted to Providence.

He had lost none of his old power of making himself agreeable, especially to the fair sex. Age, it is true, had told on him considerably, since the days when he first exercised his fascination upon the weak-minded Mary Mardale. But where would be our boasted Civilization, of what avail would be the glorious Progress of Science, and what end would the never-too-much-to-be-admired Advance-

ment of Man answer, if they had not contrived amongst them somehow by this time to discover the means of concealing the ravages of Age? Not in vain has the pale student pored over the mighty tomes of scientific lore, wrung from the bosom of Nature by sages of old; not in vain has the skilful and patient chemist, in the recesses of his laboratory, bent over the bubbling crucible or watched the wonder-working retort: for have we not Poppleton's Euplokamokallitrichocapillopækilopigment, "to impart to grey hairs a dark and lustrous colour on one application only. Warranted free from all deleterious ingredients, so common in cheap and inferior preparations. Can be applied without any trouble. To be obtained of all chemists, or direct from X. and Z. Poppleton, Sploggins-place, Budge-row. Price 3s. 6d. and 7s. 6d. per bottle. N.B. The large bottle contains a quantity equal to the contents of three small ones."

I cannot positively assert that Poppleton's was the precise compound to which Captain Hassard was indebted for the glossy black, shot in certain lights with prismatic tints of green and purple, which concealed the original grey of his hair and moustache; but this much is certain, that he dyed. His figure was still

erect and soldierly, and the lines and crow's feet, which could only have been concealed (if at all) by the expensive process of enamelling—a process so costly that it is only applied to the very porcelain of human clay—might fairly have passed as the result of exposure to changes of weather and climate, rather than of the heedless husbandry of that inferior ploughman, old Time, who never drives a straight furrow, or of the claws of those crows of Care, who follow behind his plough.

Thanks to his dye and his deportment, the Captain had so far given his age the slip, that he had become one of those people of whom it is the most difficult thing in the world to predicate how old they are. "He might be thirty or he might be fifty," was the opinion you would have given about him had you been asked.

He was not long at the boarding-house before he had contrived to ingratiate himself with his co-residents, especially with the ladies. In a short time his acquaintance enlarged, and he became a visitor at other boarding-houses. And wherever he went, Major Verner—as he now styled himself—was immensely popular. Major Verner, I should inform my reader, had served in India, and had retired on a small

pension when the government of the country was transferred from "John Company" to the Queen of England. He had been through several campaigns, and knew a great deal about the empire. To hear him relate his sporting adventures, and the narrow escape he had at a certain tiger-hunt he took part in, would have interested you deeply, even if you had been aware that it was a fiction!

Of course the Major was greatly excited when the news came that a gigantic fraud had been perpetrated on the London and Lahore Bank, by the secretary, who had contrived to escape from England with his plunder!

"Good God, sir!" said the Major to a fellow-boarder, "it may ruin me. All my little savings are in that bank! It's very terrible news to me, I assure you!"

You see, by this time, the Major's little fund had shrunk somewhat, and he thought this Bank-robbery a good opening to explain his diminished means, and give a plausible reason for his looking out for employment.

Everybody sympathized with him. Everybody admired the Spartan endurance with which—when he smiled and was cheerful, forgetting (as was not unnatural) the tremendous loss he had *not* suffered—he apparently sub-

mitted to his altered fortune. As a consequence, everybody was on the look-out to find him employment as soon as he publicly stated that it had now become necessary for him to try and find some means of supporting himself, "deprived as he was by the dishonesty of others of his small and hard-won earnings, and compelled to begin life afresh."

It so happened that just at that time the manager of a large hotel at Boston had, by long and undeviating attention to Bourbon whisky, qualified himself for confinement in one of those institutions which are almost peculiar to the United States—an "Inebriate Asylum." It became necessary to look about for a successor—a gentlemanly, agreeable, and active man. The Major's fellow-boarders were unanimous in declaring that he was just the very thing that was required. They all felt that they should miss him much—especially the ladies; for the gentlemen of course could always visit his bar!—but they agreed that it would be an advantageous opening for him, and they determined, if possible, to procure him the post.

The Major was delighted with the notion. I am not sure that he did not meditate making an offer to Mrs. Randeggar, the cheery and pretty

widow of the boarding-house—he had acquired by this time a contempt for that Statute of Limitations which applies to the number of women a man may marry; and the ceremony of matrimony (not to mention the ceremony of divorce) is an easy matter in the States. He was certainly extra attentive to the widow, who was said to have come in for a warm sum in dollars on the decease of the lamented Randeggar, who was a German by birth, and a diamond-merchant by trade.

The Major, I repeat, was delighted with the notion. He grew quite cheerful and chirpy at the prospect. He strutted about more erect than ever, flourishing his cane, and humming snatches of martial airs, as was his habit, with more than his usual floridness of execution.

The day after he got his appointment, he was marching along the street in this style, and favouring the passers-by with passages from the "Soldier's Chorus" in *Faust*, which he was giving with an imitation of a cornet effect, when he beheld a sight that drove the colour from his cheeks, and converted the opera air into a long, low whistle of alarm. He glanced hastily round for some means of escape in the shape of a turning or a store where he could take refuge. But there was

none, and he felt that it was too late, for the individual whose approach had been the cause of his fright had seen and evidently recognized him.

"Ah, Cap'n 'Assard!" said the new-comer, advancing towards him half-familiarly. "'Oo'd 'a' thought of our meetin' hout 'ere! You remember me, sir, don't ye? 'Nspector Clegg o' the Detective Force, Scotlan' Yard! Hover 'ere"—here he dropped his voice, winked mysteriously, and laid his finger on the side of his nose—"hover 'ere harter that London and Lahore Bank business. Safe to nab 'im!"

The Major gave a sigh of relief, which, if the detective had been half as acute as novelists describe his class to be, would have induced that intelligent and active officer to take him into custody at once on suscipion.

"Ah!" said the Major, recovering his self-possession, "a very bad case that! I know Boston very well, and if I can be of any service in assisting you I'll do so with pleasure."

"Thanke'e, Cap'n 'Assard," said the other. "But 'e hain't 'ere yet. 'E's a-coming hover in *The Stars and Stripes*, and hour people they took a fast steamer a-purpose special, and we've been and give the hother the go-by, and got 'ere fust. Oh, my! won't 'e be startled

neither when 'e finds me hon the Quay a-waitin' hall pleasant and nice with the darbies ready. Just won't it be a pleasant surprise, ho, no!"
And the fellow gave a quiet chuckle at the thought of his ingenuity.

"*The Stars and Stripes*, eh?" said the Major. "Why, she isn't expected for two or three days. By the way, Mr. Clegg, I have been compelled by the loss of my money, through those scoundrels Uvedale and Metford —it was with reference to their absconding that I first had the pleasure of making your acquaintance—well, owing to the loss of my money, I have been obliged to accept a situation—in fact, as manager of an hotel here—rather a come-down, you know, for an officer and a gentleman. So out of regard to the feelings of my friends and my family, I have dropped my real name for the nonce, and taken that of Major Verner."

"Oh, hall right, sir," said the detective. "Hi'm fly! By the way, you hain't 'eard anythink more of them parties. Hi *should* like to finger the reward for 'em, and no mistake, for Hi took a deal o' trouble a-lookin' harter 'em."

It was clear to the Major that Clegg was not after *him*, so he conjectured that either Oldham had been the solitary victim, or the Lovely

Leontine's case had broken down, or been abandoned. It was a relief, but he knew that he had better not tempt his fate or her vengeance by returning to England. Meanwhile, he thought it would be no bad plan to make a friend of the detective, so he invited him to call at the hotel, and, in fact, made him free of the bar there — a freedom of which Mr. Clegg availed himself liberally, while waiting the arrival of *The Stars and Stripes*. As that vessel, owing to stress of weather, was nearly a week behind her time, Mr. Clegg had a good opportunity of enjoying the Major's hospitality.

About four or five days after his meeting with the detective, the Major was invited to a party that was given at his hotel by one of its regular residents. Mrs. Randeggar was to be one of the guests; so he was, of course, delighted to accept the invitation.

The evening arrived, and the party was pretty largely attended. Among other visitors was an English gentleman, who puzzled the Major considerably in some mysterious way.

He had certainly met him before. His face was very like a face he had seen somewhere. Who could he be?

The Major was so bewildered in trying to find out what this half-revived recollection could

be, that I am afraid he appeared a little *distrait*, and was not so attentive as he should have been to the widow. At any rate, Mrs. Randeggar thought so, and felt offended. She avenged herself in truly feminine style by flirting desperately. She had no difficulty in getting up any amount of flirtations; for, besides being tolerably good-looking, she was well known to be wealthy.

Among the gentlemen whom she selected as objects of flirtation was the Englishman who so puzzled the Major. He was connected with a newspaper, having come over from England for pleasure, and having, to pass the time, undertaken this literary employment. He had been, according to his own story, acquainted with all the eminent literary men in London, and was a bit of a lion on that account. It is one of the weaknesses of human nature that if it cannot get the lion to make a hero of, it will content itself with the enthroning of the jackass, who flung up his heels in that invalid animal's face.

The gentleman was of a showy, if not gentlemanly appearance, and his costume was gorgeous. It was reported that he was of independent means, and wrote for his own amusement. He was tall, and slightly bald, though

he concealed the fact by an artful arrangement of his hair, and he wore a long black moustache and imperial.

The Major, who had been unable to piece together the scraps of recollection that floated through his brain, had busied himself in making inquiries right and left among the visitors, but he only learnt as much as I have just stated. During his absence from the widow's side, that slighted dame had drawn a little circle of admirers round her, that quite excluded the Major. Of that circle the foremost and most favoured, as he could see while hovering in wrath and fury round the spot, was the English stranger. I need hardly say that fact only made the Major the more anxious to recall what he knew of him.

The Englishman was not displeased to be made much of by the widow; and, as he gathered from hints dropped by the others that he was cutting out "old Verner," the mere fact that he was eclipsing somebody else gave zest to the pursuit. He made such play, indeed, that the others, finding it rather slow to be spectators of his triumph, and his entire monopoly of the widow's attentions and good graces, broke up the circle.

This gave the Captain a chance of approach-

ing his charmer, so he drew near with a penitent air, in the hopes of creeping into favour again. He began by regretting that his duties as manager had compelled him to absent himself so long.

"Have you been gone long?" asked the widow, with covert sarcasm.

"My dear fellow," said his rival, patronisingly, "don't be uncomfortable on that account. I can assure you we haven't observed it."

The Major started at the sound of the other's voice. There was no mistake about that affected drawling squeak. He knew his man in a moment.

"Metford, by Jove!" he exclaimed.

The other started to his feet. He stared hard at the Major. He had been too much occupied with the widow to take much notice of him before. Then he, in his turn, recognized the Major.

"Hassard!" was all he could gasp.

Before Metford had recovered himself, the Major had whispered a few hasty words in the ear of one of the helps who was handing round refreshments. The man immediately left the room.

"You scamp!" said the Major, "how dare you venture into society like this?"

The noise attracted attention. The guests gathered round. The Major looked the picture of virtuous indignation.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said he, with a lofty air, "this fellow has intruded here under false pretences. His name is Metford—he's an absconding swindler!"

"You lie!" shrieked the other, his tenor becoming almost a falsetto in his rage. Then turning to the guests he said, "This is a mere adventurer, who has run away from his wife and family to escape from his creditors!"

The guests stared, at a loss which to believe, when something occurred that turned the balance in the Major's favour—little as he deserved it! A man pushed his way through the crowd, and laid his hand on Metford's shoulder.

"Hall right, Mr. Metford! We've been a-wantin' you for a pretty spell. Come hon hout o' this, an' Hi'll show ye the warrant handsettrer hall reglar. 'Oo ham Hi? 'Nspector Clegg o' the Detective Force, Scotlan' Yard, Great Britain. Come hon! Thanke'e, Major Verner!" he added, with a grin; and he and the discomfited Metford quitted the room, leaving the Major master of the situation.

CHAPTER II.

A CHANGE IN THE BILL AT THE DROMUS.

Relieved from the worry and anxiety of the threatened law-suit and encouraged by the favourable turn matters had taken at *The Cock-crow* office, Lancelot and Violet were as happy as the days were long in the humble little home. They were so elated that, I am sorry to say, Lancelot insisted upon committing an act of extravagance. His long-talked of paper upon "Civilization and Neuralgia, as convertible terms," was finished at last, and had been disposed of so well that it brought in a cheque for fifteen guineas! Besides this, it turned out a literary success, and attracted a good deal of attention. It was a half-serious half-humorous essay, tracing the increase of neuralgia and nervous disorders in general to the high-pressure and artificial mode of life, inseparable from the most advanced civilization. It proved that "when wild in woods the noble savage ran" he did not

know neuralgia even in its lowest and undeveloped stage—tooth-ache; and then it struck the balance between savagedom with immunity from nervous affection, and civilization with a perpetual jar upon the nerves; and on the whole it gave judgment in favour of the latter.

Lancelot's extravagance was altogether a pardonable one. He knew that Violet, though she never said a word about it, had missed her piano; and he determined, now they were out of the clutches of Moss and Scardrake, and might really consider the money their own, that he would buy a piano.

Violet opposed the idea strongly when he broached the subject, for he would not take on himself to spend so much money without consulting her. But he managed to overcome her scruples, by pointing out that it would always enable her at a pinch to help to eke out their income. He even went so far as to say he would not object even now to her taking one or two—not more—of the neighbours' children as musical pupils; or, better still, she might compose some songs or dance music! So Violet consented, urged to do so by her mother, who thought it would give an air of gentility to the cottage to have a piano. At the same time Mrs. H. never offered to assist in purchasing

the instrument, though she had a nice little sum of money of her own by her. For, although it was too late to stop the sale of the Norwood villa and its contents, when he learnt from his aunt that the legal proceedings against him and the Captain were stayed, Lancelot would not touch a penny of the money realized, but handed it all over to Mrs. Hassard, who took it, *instanter*, and banked it.

After some manœuvring and bargaining, he contrived to get a very good instrument on pretty easy terms; and in due time it arrived, and was deposited with great ceremony in the parlour of the little cottage.

It was long since Violet had touched a piano, and she could almost have cried with joy when she sat down at it, and found that, despite want of practice, her hand had lost nothing of its old cunning.

"And now, Lancelot," said she, "let me begin at once to earn something. What shall I set to music—tell me a favourite of yours!"

"Here is one—my special favourite," said Lancelot, taking a book of selections from the table, and turning to a page, at which it seemed to open naturally, so often had it been turned to.

Lancelot put the book on the piano before

her. It was that exquisite poem of Dekker's, "The Happy Heart."

Art thou poor?—Yet hast thou golden slumbers,
O sweet Content!
Art thou rich?—Yet is thy mind perplexéd,
O punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexéd
To add to golden numbers golden numbers,
O sweet Content? O sweet, O sweet Content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace!
Honest labour bears a lovely face:
Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny!

Canst drink the waters of the crispéd spring,
O sweet Content?
Swimm'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears,
O punishment?
Then he that patiently want's burden bears
No burden bears!—but is a king, a king!
O sweet Content! O sweet, O sweet Content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace!
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny!

Violet read the lines through, and sat silent for a time.

"Don't you like them?" asked Lancelot.

"They are very beautiful," she answered in a voice that showed how deeply the poem had touched her. "Very beautiful—too beautiful almost for music. I almost think sometimes that a poem is not suited for music."

"Unless it is a song, a real lyric, I think you are right," was Lancelot's answer, "and this seems to me to have been written for music, or else why that quaint old chorus?"

"Ah, it may be!—but it is far beyond my poor powers. Yet it deserves a splendid setting, if it is to be put to music."

"I should like to hear it properly done. Perhaps I may some of these days, though modern composers seem to prefer rubbish—I suppose it is because there is the less chance of the words eclipsing the air; and upon my honour, the words do not need to be anything very extraordinary to do that, as a rule!"

I suppose this first failure discouraged Violet a little, for she did not achieve any musical composition which she felt was worth submitting for publication. To be sure, although she played and sang pretty often, she had not the time to give to her music which would have been necessary for the work. For Violet had of late devoted considerable attention to needlework. It was plain needlework of a Liliputian nature, which suggested the idea of dressing a big doll; only of course Violet was no longer a girl, and might be supposed to have outgrown the age of dolls. She had no little sister either, and she did not know enough as yet of

any of the little folk of the colony to admit of the explanation that she was making doll's clothes for them. Let it suffice, then, that I record the fact. Its explanation must, I suppose, be left for time to give.

About this period Lancelot seemed to be inspired with a fresh zest for work. He seemed a regular glutton for it, and slaved away at it with such immense spirit, and so cheerfully, that it made old Heginbotham even open his eyes in astonishment. As I have no better explanation to give for this sudden increase of zeal, I must put it down, I suppose, to those doll's clothes that Violet was making, though what they could possibly have to do with it, I admit—strictly in confidence between you and me—I have not the very faintest idea.

As soon as they were settled in the cottage. Violet and Lancelot invited Miss Heginbotham to come and see them, and the dear old lady spent a few days with them. Her sweet smile and her cheerful ways seemed to shame Mrs. Hassard out of her flabby despondency, and roused her so far from her chronic state of inaction that she appeared for a time at least to take an interest in what was going on around her. She even went so far as to walk to the Crystal Palace one day with Miss Heginbotham

—an exertion she would not have admitted she was capable of under other circumstances; but I imagine she had not the conscience to plead her inability when the sprightly little old maid thought the walk a mere trifle.

I have such a high opinion—I may even say such a warm affection—for this sweet old maid, and I hope have so faithfully depicted her to my readers as to make them share my sentiments towards her, that I am sorry to be obliged to confess that, while she was staying with the Oldhams, her excessive good nature induced her to descend to the weakness of encouraging Violet in her doll's-clothes folly. Confound the doll's clothes! let us change the subject, or I shall lose all patience with Violet, whom I have all along been trying to elevate to the position of heroine!

Lancelot went to see his aunt at the theatre soon after her visit to The Cottages. He tried to prevail upon her to let him bring Violet to see her, but on that point she was adamant. This stern refusal was due less, perhaps, to her sense of her own unworthiness or her respect for virtue, than to a consideration for Esther. Esther had told her all her story, and she had come to the conclusion that, to a nature like her daughter's, it would be extremely painful to

meet in altered circumstances one whom she had looked down upon and repelled in more prosperous days.

It was touching to see how these two women, the mother and daughter, who had been so early and for so long estranged, clung to one another, and tried to make up for the separation by the excess of tenderness now. It was curious to see, moreover; for each presented to the rest of the world a hard and repellant exterior.

Beside Esther, Lancelot was the only living creature for whom his aunt appeared to feel the slightest affection or regard.

When he called upon her first, she showed him all the documents and proofs of her case which she had just recovered from Moss. She said she should destroy them, but Lancelot implored her not to do that. He undertook to keep them most carefully for her if she would entrust them to him, one of the reasons she gave for destroying them being that they would prove an incumbrance to her, moving about as constantly as she did. He urged that it would be worse than folly to destroy the means of establishing her good name, and pointed out that if the proof of her marriage did nothing else, it, at any rate, disarmed inquiries as to

her relation to Esther, whose feelings would consequently be spared many a cruel pang. If people knew that his aunt had been married, they would naturally suppose that Esther was the child of that marriage, and ask no questions. The argument was jesuitical and improper, I dare say, but it was urged out of consideration for Esther, and out of regard for his aunt; so I think we must overlook this questionable advice of Lancelot's, and forgive him for the goodness of his intentions.

At any rate, he succeeded in persuading his aunt to abandon her idea of destroying the papers, which, in accordance with his suggestion, she at once transferred to his keeping.

A few days after this interview, Lancelot received instructions from his editor to go down to Scotland Yard and "interview" Inspector Clegg, who had just returned from America, having succeeded in capturing the defaulting secretary of the London and Lahore Bank, with all his booty. The fraud had created a great sensation, and the cleverness of the capture—as it was described, though the only cleverness discernible was that of the vessel which steamed faster than the *The Stars and Stripes*—had not tended to lessen the excitement. The editor of *The Cockcrow*, therefore, was anxious to have

the detective's account taken down and served up with all the graces of fancy-reporting, to tickle the palates of his readers, upon whom the constant surfeit of highly-seasoned articles in *The Cockcrow* had not been without its effect, for they kept calling out for "more pepper." In fact, the state of its public might fairly be described by the couplet from Goldsmith's "Retaliation":

> Till, his relish grown callous, almost to disease,
> Who peppered the highest, was surest to please.

With this view, the fat and providentially bald-headed little man who edited *The Cockcrow* selected Lancelot to cook up the detective's story.

Lancelot accordingly called upon the active and intelligent Clegg, and, partly by inviting him to "partake of refreshments," as the penny-a-liner puts it; partly by appealing to the man's vanity, he contrived to get a fairly continuous narrative out of him, susceptible of being dressed up to suit the cravings of *The Cockcrow's* readers. When Lancelot's cross-examination of him was over, Clegg got an opportunity of starting a conversation in his own way.

"Hax yer pardon, sir," he said, looking

Lancelot hard in the face, "but d'you know Hi've a himpression as Hi know you some'ow!"

"Professionally?" asked Lancelot, amused.

"Yes—in the line o' business some'ow or hother," was the answer.

"I have never been in custody on suspicion, even," laughingly spoke Lancelot.

"What might yer name be, hif Hi'm not a-takin' a liberty!"

"Lancelot Oldham."

"That's hit, o' course. Why, you was one o' the parties as was hanxious to nab them nice pair o' willins, Meshers Uvedale and Metford—o' course, you was! Well Hi've got 'em—hany way, Hi've got one on 'em, and hif so be 'e don't let hon where t'other 'un his, why Hi'm a hidjeot! They hallas does, them respeckable scamps. Yer reglar born and bred thief does so hoff an' hon; but yer gentlemanly swindler's safe to!"

"Which have you caught? asked Lancelot, eagerly.

"Metford—bald-'eaded chap, wi' dark mustachers. Reglar case o' killin' two birds' wi' one stone. Hall 'long o' t'other gent, has come with you when we was harter 'em—the milintary gent!"

"Captain Hassard?" asked Lancelot, with the utmost surprise.

"That's 'im, now a-managin' a hotell hin the name o' Werner, hin consideration o' the family pride."

"Where?" asked Lancelot.

"Hover in Boston—didn't you know? Met me while Hi was a-waitin' for my man, an' 'appenin' to come hon this ere Metford, gi' me the tip!"

Lancelot thought it best not to tell the detective too much, so he merely said he was aware the Captain had gone to America, but did not know that he had obtained a situation, or where he was. He had no difficulty in obtaining the address from the unsuspecting detective, and then having performed his mission —and a good deal more than his mission—he took his leave of the intelligent and well-informed officer.

He was completely puzzled how to act upon this strange and unexpected discovery of the Captain's whereabouts. He consulted Heginbotham. Heg's opinion was promptly given, and to the purpose.

"Let the blackguard alone—all the better for his wife to get rid of him, and I'm sure *you* don't want him home, nor does Mrs. Oldham,

I'll bet! Let him stop there. He's a worthless cuss, of no use to anybody. Don't say a word about him at home—it will only unsettle them!"

Lancelot agreed that this was the wisest course. But he felt that he ought to inform his aunt of the capture of Metford, in case she might feel inclined to take any steps to recover the trust-money. So he called at the theatre on his way home, taking the train from the West-end instead of the City.

She did not seem to care much about it, but said that if he thought it worth while he might consult Moss and see what could be done. She naturally asked how Metford had been captured, and Lancelot, forgetting for the minute how she had expressed herself to him about Captain Hassard, inadvertently alluded to his share in the capture.

The moment he had mentioned the name he was conscious of his mistake. But he was too late to remedy it.

His aunt turned deadly pale.

"So he is in America—at Boston!" she said, in a low hissing voice, as if she spoke with a great effort.

Lancelot could only bow his head. She did not speak for a minute or two, but when she had quite recovered her self-command, she

forced a smile, and changing the subject, told Lancelot that if he succeeded in getting any money refunded by Metford he was to give it to his wife as her wedding present.

Lancelot felt that she was not anxious to prolong the interview, so in a few minutes, after some irrevelant conversation, he took his leave.

He called once or twice afterwards, but did not find his aunt at the theatre, or else found her engaged on business and unable to see him.

Some time had elapsed, when on taking up that exclusively theatrical print, *The Sock and Buskin*, he came upon the following paragraph:

"No one who has made a study of dramatic matters, can be ignorant of the fact that an American actor is never so sure of a favourable reception in his native land, as when his performance has received the *imprimatur*, so to speak, of a success with British audiences. We could quote more than one instance in which actors whose talents have remained for years unrecognized on the other side of the Atlantic, have returned to the States after a London engagement, to find themselves established in the popular favour. We have been led to make these reflections by the announcement which has just reached us that Miss Leontine, who

has been drawing such immense houses at The Dromus in *Through Fire and Water*, has accepted an engagement at one of the principal theatres in New York. We trust that the precedent to which we have drawn attention will be followed in this case, and that the fair and talented subject of these remarks will meet with the reception which her remarkable acting so richly deserves at the hands of the American public."

Lancelot regretted his indiscretion in mentioning the Captain's name to his aunt, for he concluded at once that her object in returning to America was a desire to avenge her wrongs —real or imagined—upon that gallant officer. But Lancelot was not right in his conjecture, I fancy. Her professed object—the object, indeed, which she set before herself—was undoubtedly revenge. But just as the young lady in Tom Moore's poem went to the sculptor for an image of Friendship, but took away a statue of Cupid as a substitute, so I fancy that the Lovely Leontine was deceived as to the real nature of the veiled figure that beckoned her across the Atlantic. Was it Love—or was it Hate?

Ah, me! Man is a creature made up of contradictions—especially Woman!

The Captain had deserted her, it is true; but then he had deserted his wife twice! At any rate, he was separated from his wife now, and she might regain her old influence over him.

It is difficult to say what was her real object —*varium et semper mutabile femina.* He whose "only books are woman's looks" has a good deal of varied reading before him, that's certain.

But it is useless to inquire into her motives. Suffice it to say that the Lovely Leontine, accompanied by her daughter, not to mention White Lily, set out in due course of time for the United States.

CHAPTER III.

SOWING THE WIND.

To a person of philosophic mind, or to one in whom a devouring affection for lobsters induces a tender consideration for their brother-crustacean, there is something pitiable in the spectacle presented by a misanthropic and persecuted spider that has had its patiently-constructed web demolished by the careful broom of Betty Housemaid—and has had, indeed, much ado to make good its own retreat, and preserve its life from the pursuing and implacable besom. As it sits crouched in a safe corner far aloof, trembling in all its hairy limbs with rage, disappointment, terror, and the other passions born of hate and horror in the breasts of spiders and of men, it is an object of pity to the well-regulated mind alone. To the ordinary run of humanity, it merely suggests the propriety of its being promptly and pitilessly annihilated. "Look at that nasty horrid spider!"—scerrunch! That is the general verdict, followed by the execution

of the sentence. But the student of Natural History, having overcome the idle repugnance the creature inspires in ignorant minds, is interested in the maltreated Arachnoid, reflecting on the many marvels of its structure—its strange organs of sight, its complex spinnerets, its powerful jaws, and the odd habit which the family possesses in common with the kindred class of crustaceans—that of casting their shelly coats, the covering of their eyes, the linings of their stomachs, and even what Hibernian naturalists describe as "the skin of their teeth."

Neither you nor I, my dear reader, belong to the common herd, of course, so I take it for granted that, like students or philosophers, we can behold, without any destructive impulse or bloodthirsty repugnance, the spectacle presented by that arch-spider, Scardrake, as he sits, grim and aggrieved, in the midst of the wreck of his schemes, his hopes, his labours—the shattered cordage of his craftily-contrived web, which the remorseless broom of that jade, Fortune, has destroyed past repairing or reconstructing. We will leave it to others, with minds not unprejudiced, to declare that it serves him right, and to rejoice that he is foiled. In our well-balanced judgment, we see something sad in the waste of so much ingenuity and in-

dustry—however misapplied. The destruction of the labour of a lifetime is a disaster of sufficient magnitude to excuse his rage, his alarm, his despair, his sorrow. Such a calamity might be pleaded in defence of the strongest language he could have used, and would prevail even with persons as punctilious as the Scotch theatrical manager, who, during the preparations for producing "Macbeth" at his house, remonstrated with the actor who was to perform Macduff for his language in the passage where he laments the loss of "all his pretty chickens." "'Twas a sair affliction," said the manager, "but no' to be held to justify profane swearing!"

Scardrake had at one fell swoop lost all his pretty chickens, including some that he had reckoned before they had begun to chip the shell. Whether the chicks were guileless poultry or unfledged birds of ill-omen; whether the eggs would have hatched out into blameless bantams or culpable cockatrices, matters not: the loss of the sitting of eggs, or the brood of nestlings, was undoubtedly a dire calamity, and one over which Scardrake had a fair claim to be permitted to mourn and even to rave.

He had planned his future while he still retained the love of his daughter. It was for her that he had spread his toils, and sucked the

blood of so many flies, fat, foolish, and frail, that had ventured into his reach. I admit that, intensely as I hate the rogue, I cannot restrain a faint spasm of pity for him now; just as I hope Betty Housemaid feels a pang of remorse, when, as her avenging broom sweeps down a spider's web, she sees the terrified creature scuttle away, but carry with it the little yellow silk bag of eggs, which the instinct of parental love, strong even in so tiny an animal, will not permit it to leave exposed to danger.

Esther had chosen her own path, and had left him. If they had been somewhat estranged of late, they were not separated. Now, the house appeared deserted and desolate. It seemed to become possessed of echoes, that mocked him with the sound of her foot on the floor overhead, the rustle of her dress on the stairs outside. He used to get up and open the door, or go up to the vacant rooms with a superstitious dread, yet with a sort of half hope, that it had all been a dream—a distempered vision—and that his daughter was still with him.

The emptiness of the house was unendurable. But what could he do? He could find no one to fill Esther's place. His relatives were all estranged—even the knowledge of his great wealth could not induce them to put up with

the old scoundrel. As for friends, how could such a man have friends? His friendship fell like a curse, for it was certain, sooner or later, to betray those on whom it was bestowed into the old usurer's snares. Friend or acquaintance, the unhappy victim was pounced upon, and sucked and squeezed dry—the empty shell only remaining to be cast out of the web as a warning to others. No, Scardrake had neither relative nor familiar friend: he was completely alone in the world! His sole companion was a troubled conscience, and that, so far from rendering his home habitable, made it a dwelling place for the haunting ghosts of Remorse, Superstition, and Despair.

He dreaded the hour for returning to the Brixton villa, which had once seemed the embodiment of comfort and success. He lingered at his club, or he loitered at his office, he hung about the theatre, or he delayed at the tavern, inventing all sorts of excuses for delay, until the inevitable moment arrived, and he *must* go home.

Of course this could not go on long. He took a room at his club, and gave instructions to an agent to sell the villa and all it contained. No—not all it contained, for he could by no manner of transfer, or deed of assignment, make over

with it the melancholy echoes and the awful spectres which troubled it for him. It was lucky for the next resident that he could not; indeed, it is fortunate for us all that the outgoing tenant whom we succeed in occupancy leaves nothing behind for us save such harmless fixtures as a few blinds, or shelves, or other useful oddments. Think what it would be if we took over his echoes and his ghosts! Talk of haunted houses with mysterious sounds and appalling sights! The hollow fall of viewless feet, the dimly-seen apparition would be nothing in comparison with such sights and sounds. Thank goodness, my dear sir, or madam, that the shell into which you move yourself and your goods and chattels is as empty of all that concerns your predecessor, as the whelk-shell, into which that restless and residence-shifting fellow, the hermit-crab, whisks his defenceless tail, is devoid of any relic of its original owner. For all that you know, a murder may have been committed there—on the very spot where your slippers are put out for you beside the fire. Your easy chair may stand over the place where the awful secret was buried. In the bedroom where you repose so peacefully, a guilty conscience may have summoned up a panorama of crimes that drove sleep away; or a sinful soul,

wrestling in its last agony, may have parted shrieking from the clay. But you, thank Heaven, know nothing of these ghastly things; and for you, therefore, they do not exist, or your house would be uninhabitable. I recall a story told me by a friend, which confirms to some extent what I say. He chanced to have been mainly instrumental in effecting the capture of a criminal, the story of whose guilt is often quoted in connection with the first employment of the electric telegraph to arrest a criminal fugitive. Some years after, this gentleman, having quitted Slough, meditated taking a house, which was situated, if I remember rightly, near Ware. Going to look over the place, he was shown into a room where the then occupant shortly afterwards joined him. This gentleman, after some conversation, asked his visitor if he were the Mr. —— who had resided at Slough in such a year, and on being answered in the affirmative, said, "Well, then, just where you are standing now, the slippers of ——, the murderer, were put out waiting for his arrival on the very night when he was captured through your instrumentality." I have but one more thing to add to the story—my friend did *not* take that house!

But we must now return to Scardrake, who,

having sold his house and furniture at Brixton, began to look about him, and consider what step he should take next. He was weary of his fruitless toiling after wealth—he was disgusted with it, as with everything that reminded him that he had spent his life, and even imperilled his soul, to achieve an object which, like a bubble, vanished just as it was at its brightest, and when he seemed at last about to grasp it!

He determined to wind up his affairs and quit London!

He had no difficulty in disposing of his bill-discounting business. There were scores of vultures ready to invest in a connection so extensive as his was; and sharp and angry were the cries with which they swooped down on the carcases he offered for sale, and fought over and disputed the prey.

His theatrical investment he could not dispose of quite so readily or so profitably. But he no longer looked upon the reduction of his terms as if it were a surrender of drops of heart's blood; for in that light he had viewed any such abatement in former times. So he parted with The Leicester on tolerably easy terms to Mr. Baggallay, who had made so much money out of the Lovely Leontine's blaze of

triumph, that he must, perforce, expend it on theatrical speculation. To judge from the readiness and frequency with which people not only submit to, but even court, the loss of money by theatrical speculation it must be the only form of pecuniary loss that is absolutely pleasurable, instead of being painful! How many men—especially actors—seem to toil and strive to earn money for no other purpose than to lose it over a theatre. When one sees a worthy fellow, who has laboured and studied at his profession for years, who has risen to a foremost place in its ranks, and made a comfortable little fortune, and who, nevertheless, instead of retiring from the stage, takes a theatre and makes ducks and drakes of his hard earnings, one cannot but think—and it is consoling to do so—that to lose money in a theatrical venture must be an exquisite delight. It does not look as if it were; but then one would not suppose drowning to be a pleasurable sensation. Yet those who have been revived after an immersion describe it as—after a short, sharp spasm—a delicious falling-to-sleep amid strains of beautiful music. In like manner, possibly, those who have gone through the operation will tell us that to be ruined by speculating in a theatre is wild excitement and ravishing joy.

One by one, all the irons which Scardrake had had in the fire for so many years were brought to market and sold—with one exception. Nobody would make a bid for *The Obelisk*. That invaluable and admirably-conducted magazine was a drug! Nobody would touch it.

Scardrake did all he could to find a publisher who would invest, but in vain! He offered it for a mere song to the speculative swindler who had originally purchased it when its price was reduced to a shilling. The rehabilitated scamp, with the airs of a Mæcenas and the appearance of a Methodist parson, was once more established in business, and was publishing beautiful and instructive works, in their reviews of which the critics were wont to say that his name was a sufficient guarantee for their wholesome and instructive character—so deeply discerning is the critical mind! Scardrake could make nothing of the scamp, who was too sharp for him. If he wished for a magazine, he candidly assured Scardrake he could start a new one to-morrow, and would do so in preference to purchasing one that had been in existence for some time, and had gone down in the public estimation. It did not add to Scardrake's joy to hear the fellow (who, to give him his due,

had knowledge and experience—else how could he have been so successful ?) wind up his refusal with this remark—" If you had offered it to me while it was doing as well as it was when you first bought it, and while Oldham edited it for you, I might have said something to you."

Then Scardrake bethought him of those amateur geniuses who had been owners of *The Obelisk* for a time, and it occurred to him that possibly—nay, of a certainty—the tribe of unrecognized talent was not extinct, and that some one might be found to buy the magazine as the only means of seeing himself in print. So he advertised in *The Palladium :* " To Literary Aspirants.—For sale, on easy and reasonable terms, an excellent and long-established magazine. Could be carried on at comparatively small cost. An admirable opening for any one anxious to make a *début* in literature. Terms on application, by letter, prepaid, to Proprietor, care of Messrs. Bliss and Cardington, Little Greyfriars-street."

But even here Scardrake was too late in the field. Some enterprising publisher had bethought him of the quantity of ambitious amateurs that there must be floating about, and had determined to turn them to profit. So he had started a periodical on a simple but inge-

nious plan—only those who were subscribers for the magazine were qualified to contribute, and they had to pay a "trifle to cover the outlay on production" whenever their contributions appeared. By this clever idea of making the vain scribes pay twice over, the spirited publisher made a good thing of it; and, as a matter of course, a number of imitators sprung up with servile copies of his plan; and, as a result, amateur genius had such a wide field that Scardrake could not find any one disposed to buy *The Obelisk*, therein to exploit his vanity and incompetence.

To speak the truth, the literary market was overstocked. A period of great prosperity, when every speculation, fairly and spiritedly conducted, had ended in solid success, had been followed by times of depression, due, among other causes, to the spirit of imitation which, in lieu of invention and originality, pervades the literary trade, and invariably produces a score of counterfeits of every publication that establishes itself successfully.

Scardrake did not care to let the magazine die. It represented money, and to stop it would be to lose the money entirely; and Scardrake, though he no longer cared to accumulate wealth, had still an instinctive horror of throwing it

away, which seemed a sort of pecuniary murder —a crime not to be dreamt of! So he determined to keep the magazine going until he could find a purchaser. He arranged for its production and management with a publisher, who was a sort of literary baby-farmer, and undertook to nurse and tend the ricketty bantlings until such a time as insufficient nourishment, or some one of the many ailments peculiar to magazine infancy, should put an end to their sufferings.

When he had thus far succeeded in arranging his affairs in London, Scardrake turned his attention to his business relations at Spincaster. He had so many irons in the fire at that busy manufacturing and commercial place, that it was necessary that he should go down in person to manage the winding-up of his affairs there.

His visits to Spincaster were never received with too much rapture by the inhabitants. If they ever rang a peal in commemoration of his stay amongst them, it must have been when he was leaving the town, to celebrate, if not to accelerate, his departure.

But if on ordinary occasions his presence was not looked on in the light of a blessing, his visit at this particular juncture was peculiarly unwelcome.

He came like a blight or a pestilence; for he came at a time of commercial depression, during a stagnation of the local manufactures; and he came to call in, at a moment when it was next to impossible to realize, all the loans he had made to the traders and factors, who, while they found it hard enough to pay the exorbitant interest he asked, had thought that so long at least as that interest was paid, he would not demand the return of the capital. But now he came down upon them like a thunder-clap, and called for instant repayment!

It was in vain they sued for time, or even offered to pay increased interest—double—treble—any money. He was going to retire from business, and he steadily declined to keep his books open for any one. All transactions must be cleared up—it did not matter to him at what cost.

Consternation fell upon Spincaster; for although most of the merchants and manufacturers had given Scardrake a wide berth, and kept out of his clutches, yet the relations, credit, and interests of them all were so interwoven and interdependent, that the ruin of Scardrake's victims could not but injure the rest. His popularity was not increased, therefore, when it became known that he had instituted pro-

ceedings to recover his money in more than one instance.

In a short time there was to be observed unmistakable evidence of his handiwork. The "List of Bankrupts" began to contain more than its fair proportion of Spincaster names. The town was "blown upon," and very naturally other creditors began to follow Scardrake's example; and the panic spread.

But Scardrake looked on unmoved at the ruin he had effected; though whichever way he turned he met scowling faces and threatening words. What did he care? It was a sort of sullen satisfaction to him to see others as miserable as himself. He would have his money at any cost!

Why should he be troubled though poor Bragley blew his brains out the day after he had been obliged to suspend payment? He only smiled when Bragley's widow, half-distraught with her calamity, meeting him in the market-place, solemnly cursed him before all the people! When Mr. Hannings fell down in the Exchange, and it was pronounced to be disease of the heart, aggravated by mental distress about pecuniary matters, Scardrake only shrugged his shoulders. When Mrs. Wraughton, with her six children—the youngest barely a

month old—were turned out into the streets by the brokers, Scardrake merely said it was no affair of his. He gloated over the suffering and want of others. Was not he suffering the bitter pangs of disappointment? Was not there a want—the need of some one to comfort him in his old age—gnawing at his solitary heart? What were the want and sufferings of others compared with his?

So he stayed at his house in the suburbs of Spincaster, and drove into the town in his gig every day to hear the latest news of disaster and ruin; and to urge his lawyer on to press and vex and persecute the luckless wretches who had fallen a prey to their own imprudence, and Scardrake's rapacity.

I wonder that he was not alarmed at the fierce eyes that glared at him as he drove through the streets—at the muttered threats and curses that fell on his ear—at the menacing gestures that greeted his appearance in the Exchange. The feeling ran so high, that one day, when he had taken a glass of sherry at the bar of an hotel, a Spincastrian who was present nad—before Scardrake was out of hearing—flung the glass behind the fire, and offered to pay for it, saying, "it would have poisoned anybody who happened to drink out of it after

that scoundrel!" And this sentiment was warmly applauded by those present, and the hotel people refused payment for the glass.

Still Scardrake was not alarmed. He was right, perhaps, in thinking that these outward evidences of hate were of little meaning, and, indeed, were less dangerous on account of their being openly displayed. But he should have remembered that though you may sow kindness by the acre, and get no crop of gratitude in return, not a seed of hatred ever falls to the ground without bearing fruit sooner or later.

CHAPTER IV.

MOGRIDGE MANAGES TO "SQUARE" IT.

THE philosophic Clegg was not mistaken in the estimate he formed of the amount of honesty that exists among thieves of the Metford and Uvedale class. When he found himself cornered beyond prospect or possibility of escape, it would seem that Bertrand Metford began to reflect on the solace which is to be found in companionship in misfortune. It is not impossible, moreover, that he considered the matter from a more business-like point of view, and was forced to the conclusion that if Uvedale were captured, not only would it tell in favour of the accomplice who delivered him to justice, but, as being senior partner, Uvedale would come in for the lion's share of condemnation. Furthermore, this estimable creature recalled the fact that with all his faults James Uvedale was somewhat a dull rogue; whereas his partner, Bertrand Metford, was an ingenious and plausible rogue, and could contrive, per-

haps, to shift most of the blame to the shoulders of his less skilful accomplice.

There was one special talent of his on which Mr. Metford relied implicitly—his natural gift of, and cultivated excellence in, the noble art of lying. I have before broached my theory that only a fool can succeed thoroughly in becoming an accomplished rogue, because it requires a certain amount of recklessness, that borders closely upon folly, to enable a man to put a bold face on his villainy. In the same way, and for similar reasons, nobody but a fool can attain to the highest distinction as a liar. An honest man is the noblest work of God, we are assured on good authority; but a consummate liar is the masterpiece of a personage whose proudest title is that of Parent of Lies. Such a liar is a wonderful study; only himself can be his parallel. Any one with a grain of prudence or common sense would—apart from any moral motive—pause ere he set forth on such a perilous career. He would blench at the prospect opening before him—the constant anxiety he must undergo lest he should drop some needful link in the long chain of falsehoods—the dread of self-contradiction—the necessity of a tenacious memory—the wear and tear of constant vigilance against surprise, and of per-

petual preparation to meet and rebut, or explain away inconsistencies. All these are things not to be lightly undertaken. Only a fool would wilfully assume so awful a responsibility.

I am aware that this must seem a paradox. The children of this world are said to be wiser in their generation than the children of light; that is, apparently wiser, I fancy, as judging from results. They have their reward, in the immediate enjoyment of that for which they have lied, or otherwise done rascality. But that they are really wiser in the highest sense of the word "wisdom" I cannot believe is intended. They see only what is just before them—their vision does not penetrate beyond the earthly mists. The rogue, in fact, says in his heart, "there is no God,"—and the Psalmist attributes the same sentiment to the fool.

Bertrand Metford was a fool of the first water, and consequently he was a rogue and a liar of considerable magnitude. The feeble mouth, the affected drawl, the squeaky tone, the low brow, the bald and retreating skull, the drooping eyelid, the shifting, restless eye that could not look you straight in the face, save in rare and furtive side-glances, the self-satisfied

demeanour, the ostentatious style of dress, were one and all evidences of egregious folly; but of the folly of the idiot, which is combined with such a large proportion of low cunning. When he was lying you could see that he began by deceiving himself, and concluded from that triumph that he must succeed in deceiving you!

Counting, no doubt, on this proficiency to enable him to exonerate himself as much as possible by incriminating his partner, Bertrand Metford revealed to Mr. Clegg the whereabouts of James Uvedale. Mr. Clegg had been able, in securing Bertrand Metford, to recover a large sum of money with which the embezzler had fortified himself against a rainy day. An equally large sum must be concluded to have been secured by Uvedale as his share of the plunder, and so the detective very properly calculated that his reward would bear some ratio to the amount of money he recovered. When Metford gave up his accomplice, Mr. Clegg lost no time in going in search of him.

After their arrival in America, Metford and Uvedale had separated, the latter, as we are aware, going to Boston, where he passed himself off as a man of letters—which he did, not because he had any regard for letters, but

because they were the fashion at Boston—while James Uvedale went westward, and found congenial occupation in horseing—and occasionally driving—one of the stages between two large Western towns.

Here Mr. Clegg found him, and secured him, together with as much plunder as was left after deducting the price of his cattle. Mr. Clegg did not think it advisable to inform Uvedale that he had been betrayed by Metford; and to do Uvedale credit, he never mentioned his partner's name, or thought for one instant of delivering him up. He was fool enough for all ordinary purposes, but not fool enough to make a decent show as a rogue, like his partner. He was, in fact, altogether a much better lot than Metford, as even Clegg admitted, having in the course of the journey to England found his prisoner so sociable and condescending that he almost regretted that he had succeeded in taking him. As a set-off against this, it should be remembered that, whereas Bertrand Metford had always affected the society of swells, his partner had associated from choice with grooms, stablemen, and helps; and consequently found himself much more at home with Clegg.

Great was the rejoicing among the victims of the firm when they heard that Uvedale and

Metford were safe in custody, and that a pretty large sum of money had been captured with them.

When, in due course, the defaulters were brought before a magistrate, who, after hearing the evidence against them, said, in adjourning the case, that he had decided that they must be committed for trial, the satisfaction of everybody in court was plainly manifest—of everybody, did I say? No—not of everybody, for there was one exception to the general state of gratification. A little wizened old man, who sat timidly in a corner at the back of the court, seemed to be keenly alive to the humiliation of Messrs. Uvedale and Metford's position. It was the faithful old clerk, Mogridge!

He had flown to the side of his old masters as soon as he heard of their capture. It was he who employed old Moss to defend them, and it was he who drew up the brief and made suggestions for their defence—who, in short, out of his excessive loyalty for the firm he had served so long, expended all the resources of his reading, all the stores of his experience, in order to devise some plan that might win immunity for a crime which the honest old boy was compelled to condemn in his own conscience! But he struggled in vain, so far as a

dismissal of the case was concerned. His next step was to endeavour to shield them from a committal. To this end the faithful and devoted clerk moved heaven and earth to induce the prosecutors to hold their hands and not press the case against them to its bitter conclusion.

Old Mogridge knew enough of humanity to be aware that mercy is more easily purchased than obtained by begging. He therefore arranged a little plan with Metford and Uvedale which was calculated to bring the other side to gentler measures. Clegg had, in fact, not been able to secure all the booty they had gone away with, and it was by offering to place the creditors on the right road to recover it that old Mogridge hoped to get better terms for the guilty partners.

They did not relish having to disgorge everything so completely, but Moss told them plainly that it would be impossible to escape a conviction, and advised them by all means to "square it," as the old clerk advised.

Mogridge accordingly was empowered to treat with the enemy, and offer, in consideration of the withdrawal of the prosecution, the undertaking of the two scamps to assist in recovering as much money as possible. This proposition was scouted with virtuous indig-

nation, to begin with, by the prosecutors. But Mogridge had expected as much. He retired, merely leaving behind him a statement of the probable amount of money that might be recovered if his proposal were accepted.

The prosecution having exhausted its virtuous indignation in protesting against any compounding of such an unmistakable swindle, fell to reflecting on the amount of money which Mogridge had mentioned. It certainly did seem a pity that it should not be recovered, said they; and then the virtuous indignation lost some of its charm, and finally old Mogridge was invited to call again.

His next interview with them was so far successful, that although they had not actually agreed to terms, they consented to a remand—indeed, applied for it themselves. The magistrate, of course, assented, the prisoners did not resist it, and Mogridge and the prosecutors applied the time thus obtained to haggling over the bargain.

The old clerk saw now that the whole thing was settled. The indignant virtue which hesitates is lost; the prosecution which consents to consider the proposal of the prisoner to assist in getting back some of the money is sure to end by withdrawing from the prosecution.

It is our proud boast that Justice is not an object of barter in this country, that our Bench is incorruptible, and our Bar above suspicion. All very true, no doubt; but how about our prosecutors? In the absence of a Public Prosecutor, who shall act solely on behalf of our national morality, prosecutors will always be found who care less for the punishment of crime than for their own pecuniary profit. These are the people who "recommend the prisoner to mercy on the ground of his youth"—and because some of his relations have, to use a term that disgraces turf-phraseology, "got at them." These are the people who "do not wish to press the case against the prisoner, out of consideration for his previous good character," and because he is well connected, and his people will do anything to hush up the scandal. These are the people who, when at a meeting of creditors, some bankrupt *in posse* turns out to have played certain pranks for which he should be tried at the Old Bailey, say that it is better to look the matter over, and see how much money can be realized for the benefit of the creditors generally. These are, in short, the people who, by thus compounding felonies, encourage the growth of crime and give rogues confidence—the people who, for their disregard

of morals and love of money, deserve to be put in the dock alongside of the prisoner; and who, if they only got their deserts, would be flogged at a cart's tail from Whitechapel to Westminster!

Mogridge knew his men, and after a little fencing and foining, brought them to an understanding. The iniquitous compact was ratified, and the rogues, according to agreement, delivered up a moiety of the money—or rather, gave the prosecution information which enabled them to recover it.

Then the case came before the magistrate again, and the prosecution expressed a desire to withdraw. They had reason to believe that the prisoners were not actually guilty to the extent that had been supposed, and they had voluntarily given every assistance in their power to aid in recovering all the money they could. In short, the prosecution intimated that, if Messrs. Uvedale and Metford would not leave the court without a stain on their character, at least they were people more sinned against than sinning, the victims of a sudden reaction in the commercial world, and of extraordinary temptations. Taking all these things into consideration, the prosecution had no desire to press the case against them.

The worthy magistrate was an Alderman, and, of course, it was impossible for him to let slip such an opportunity for airing the eloquence which had so often gained him distinction in the Common Council!

Mogridge's only alarm had been that this civic magnate would stupidly insist on doing his duty, and refuse to allow the prosecutors to withdraw. But fortunately one of the prosecutors knew the Alderman, and in conversation with him a few days before, had pointed out the desirability of letting these unfortunate young men escape the extreme sentence, and tempering justice with mercy.

Accordingly, the worthy Alderman expressed no objection to the course proposed by the prosecution, but he took the opportunity to enlarge on their consideration and kindness, and he impressed on the prisoners his sense of the gravity of their offence. He trusted that the peril in which they had been placed would teach them a lesson, and that they would perceive how surely the slightest deviation from the paths of commercial integrity was punished. Then he expressed his sorrow that two men so young, and of such respectability, should have done anything to bring them into the felon's dock; and he wound up with a brief sketch of

his own career, the moral whereof was that by the strictest probity, and an untiring attention to business, he had risen to the unspeakable dignity of sitting in that court, uttering dreary platitudes, while his chief clerk administered the law; and that the road to this brilliant distinction was open to the humblest individual who should bring integrity and industry to his employment as errand boy, shopman, or whatever calling he might have adopted.

When the Alderman had concluded this harangue to his own satisfaction, Metford and Uvedale were free to depart, and they lost no time in availing themselves of their freedom. Mogridge, with tears in his eyes, was waiting without to shake them by the hand and congratulate them on their escape. They were grateful to him, as they ought to have been; for it was due to his efforts alone that they had escaped. Even Metford felt that, and spoke with genuine feeling to the old clerk for once in his life.

Of course the newspapers, as is their unpleasant wont, fell foul of the prosecution for withdrawing in a case where the guilt was so evident, and of the worthy Alderman for allowing them to withdraw. However, the prosecution did not mind, drawing consolation from

the reflection that they had made rather a good bargain than otherwise. And the Alderman did not mind, for he would rather be abused than ignored by the press; and the attacks upon him afforded a reason for taking an early opportunity to defend his conduct in an elaborate, if somewhat long-winded speech.

On the whole, therefore, everybody was satisfied—including the newspapers even, who were glad of the opportunity of urging upon Government the necessity for appointing a Public Prosecutor. You see such an office would naturally be held by a barrister, and a great many of the gentlemen who wrote the leaders were barristers, so they felt it would be good for the profession—not meaning for themselves, because, of course, no Government ever thinks of rewarding with snug posts of this kind its political partisans on the press.

Uvedale and Metford only stayed in England long enough to complete the restitution they had undertaken to make to the prosecutors. When that was done they turned their backs on their native land, convinced that they must seek a home and a livelihood elsewhere. Bertrand Metford went to Calcutta, where he obtained a place in a merchant's office. James Uvedale went to Australia, where he was soon

heard of as a large horse-dealer, and proprietor of one or two stages.

As for old Mogridge, his knowledge of the law had so struck old Moss, that the Sick Vulture engaged him as managing clerk; and it is whispered in legal circles (by which I mean among the clerks and errand boys) that Mogridge is likely to become a partner in the business before very long.

CHAPTER V.

"EMPLOYMENT FOR THE GENTLEMEN OF THE LONG-ROBE."

MATTERS got worse and worse at Spincaster. They got so bad that people at last, instead of talking about the necessity for things mending at such a pass, came to the stolid belief that things never would mend at all. There had been bad times there before more than once, but somehow they had arisen from transitory causes, and had been purely local in effect. Now there was a general depression throughout the country to be added to the special disasters of Spincaster, and the result was that its traders and manufacturers could get no spring, when they fell back as they had before on their customers and constituents in other places.

Scardrake was annoyed because he lost a good deal of money by the failure of his victims. But he was not so terribly annoyed as he would have been had the calamity come a few months

earlier, when he was heart and soul—if he had them—in his money-making trade.

As a spectator, he found some amusement in watching the rising tide of ruin as it overran the unhappy town. I doubt not that many of my readers can recall how on some pleasant evening in their welcome holiday by the seaside they have watched the waves creep up gradually along the sand. They have marked some spot —a rock or a neglected sand-fort left by the children—and have wondered would the water reach to that. Then seeing its submergence was certain, they have fixed on some new point as a limit of the tide-line—perhaps only to find that in a few minutes they must abandon that, and choose yet another.

Scardrake found his inhuman sport in watching how the waters of Adversity rose around the great houses and factories in Spincaster. He calculated on the chance of its swallowing up certain of them, and then finding they were undermined and were tottering to their fall he would look higher yet, among the better-established businesses. Rollins and Clayson *must* go—would Widgett and Bounderly withstand the shock? Claudeboys, Mumphy, and Ibbetson were lost—would Gemmett and Furnivale follow? In this way he regarded the struggles

and trials of men far better than himself; but men, I regret to say, who, one after the other, were compelled to submit to their doom.

The once busy town became silent and desolate. They said the grass grew in the streets, but that was not quite the fact. It was worn down by feet that had seldom trod them before, —for carriages were all parted with as impossible luxuries, and one and all walked!

It was like a place that had been given up to some terrible pestilence. Shops and offices were closed. Houses "to let" stared with their blank melancholy eyes on all sides.

Of course the same calamity which had brought so many large businesses to a standstill, and had emptied so many factories, did not fail to fill the workhouse, and give the poor-law officers plenty of employment. It helped to fill the gaols, too; for many a desperate man—a black sheep, whom constant employment alone had confined to the pastures of Honesty—took to violence or theft, to get his bread or his drink.

One night, as Scardrake was driving home from Spincaster, he had an unpleasant adventure. His cob, a sleek and well-to-do beast, was ambling along at a comfortable pace, when Scardrake noticed a figure that dropped from

the hedge, gave a long low whistle, and began to trot along the footpath just on a level with his gig.

He whipped his nag into a quicker pace, but he could not shake off the runner, who quickened his pace too. Scardrake shook in every limb, and broke out in a cold perspiration!

He had heard of the robberies—with considerable violence—which had taken place, but had not troubled his head much about them. Now they came back to him with remarkable force. What was worse, when he tried to persuade himself that this did not mean an attempt to rob him, his suspicious mind suggested to him that it was revenge and not robbery that was intended. This only alarmed him the more.

He whipped his cob—savagely whipped it; but the cob was blesesd with a thick hide, well lined with fat, and a stolid temper, pampered by little and easy work. So he only acknowledged the lashing with a whisk of his tail, and declined stubbornly to mend his pace.

Scardrake cursed and swore to himself, and still his unknown companion kept up alongside of him on the path.

Presently the fellow whistled again, and this time the signal was answered. Scardrake felt

that in a few moments the meaning of the other's movements would be fully—if not quite satisfactorily—explained. He peered through the gathering gloom in front of him, and saw one or two other figures, standing in the road, showing up dark against the dusty highway. There was no time to lose! Inspired with a sudden thought, he turned his cob's head rapidly in the direction whence he had come. He was not a skilful driver, and he nearly contrived to upset the gig; but the cob understood what was wanted, and spun round rather rapidly, thinking to himself that he would rather go back to the comfortable stables of the "George" at Spincaster, than onward to his own somewhat neglected stall and stinted food at his master's house.

The man who had been running beside Scardrake was taken by surprise. He gave a loud cry as if to warn his confederates there was something amiss. But he was unable to stop and turn till he had shot ahead some paces, and this gave Scardrake a start, which he did his best to profit by.

Looking back hastily over his shoulder, he saw that he was being pursued, not only by the man who had kept up with him but by the others. He could hear them swearing among

themselves, and uttering all sorts of fearful threats.

Again he pressed the cob to exert himself, and the animal, inspired possibly by thoughts of the "George," condescended to move more rapidly. But even then, as Scardrake was aware on giving a second glance over his shoulder, he was by no means distancing his pursuers.

Scardrake plied the butt-end of his whip vigorously on his cob's sides, and tried to urge him along by voice as well. It was a terrible race!

All at once he heard the sound of hoofs ahead, and began to hope. As they came nearer he could also distinguish the clank of a sabre, and his heart gave a great jump of joy when he remembered that as he drove out of Spincaster he had passed a mounted constable who was talking to the turnpike-man.

Scardrake's pursuers heard the sound too, and knew its meaning. When he turned again to see where they were, they had disappeared.

When the patrol came up, Scardrake could scarcely find voice enough to speak to him. The cob was in a steam with his unwonted exertions; but I think he was hardly worse than his master, on whose brow the huge drops stood cold and clammy, and whose shirt

struck chill to him as if it had been dipped in ice-water!

The constable reined-up his horse, and inquired what had happened—for Scardrake, in his struggles to speak, swung his arms about like an insane semaphore. At last he found voice, and explained his alarm and his danger. The patrol said he had heard the whistle and the cry, and had hurried on in consequence. He had seen some ugly customers hanging about the road for some time past. He would see Mr. Scardrake safely home, and then scour the roads and lanes to see if he could capture the fellows. Scardrake was mighty glad of his escort, and was indeed so full of gratitude that he even opened his heart so far as to present his deliverer with two half-crowns, which the patrol, though he was grateful enough for them, did not value half as much as I hope he would had he known how rarely such presentation medals were given away by Scardrake.

"Take the brute away, and shoot it—or sell it!" said Scardrake to his groom, as he flung him the reins on alighting at his own door.

The cob's fate was sealed! It had failed Scardrake in a dire emergency, and he who had never spared a friend who had done him

services many, was not the man to forgive a beast that had not done its duty.

He parted with the heavy chaise, and bought a dog-cart. He got it cheap—for such things were a drug in Spincaster. He did not give much either for his horse—a tall, stout, fiery chestnut, with a goodish bit of blood in its veins. There were plenty of fine nags in the market, for those who had money to buy.

A few days after his escape from the highway-robbery, Scardrake received a call from the patrol. That vigilant constable — stimulated by the two half-crowns—had hunted high and low for the fellows, and had indeed secured two or three suspicious characters, and wanted Scardrake to come and see if he could identify any of them.

En route for the court, he took the liberty of explaining to Scardrake, that supposing he could identify any of the ruffians, they could be brought up before the bench for attempted robbery with violence; and then the acute officer went on to demonstrate that, with a view to ensuring their punishment, it would be well not to go too minutely into the story of the attack—for instance, in describing himself as surrounded by them, he was not called on to say how far off they were. He even went so

far—in his zeal to bring his own efficiency under the notice of the bench—as to intimate to Scardrake that as all the fellows he should submit for inspection were rogues of the very deepest dye, there was no necessity to be particular in giving them the benefit of a doubt whether they were the particular ruffians who assailed—in fact, they would have done it if they had been present, so it was as well to punish them whether or no!

Primed with these constabular notions of justice and law, and by no means averse from acting on them in order to "make an example," Scardrake began a scrutiny of the suspected scamps. A more miserably abject set of scoundrels he had never beheld: and even he began to think that the constable had put the case too strongly, and that some of these poor wretches had no greater sin to answer for than poverty.

At last one man was produced, at the sight of whom Scardrake gave a start. Nor was the man less moved than Scardrake.

"Ah, that's one on 'em, eh?" said the patrol, and the devil put it into Scardrake's heart to say "Yes," and thereupon the constable clapped a pair of handcuffs on Herbert Elwin's wrists, and hurried him into a cell,

before he had time to open his mouth in his own defence.

Luckily for poor Elwin there was a little jealousy between the patrol and another officer of police, and the latter sufficiently forgot the *esprit de corps*, usually so strong in the force, to take on himself to advise Elwin to employ Mr. Jones, a local solicitor with a most unenviable reputation as a thieves' lawyer. Accordingly, Elwin summoned that estimable practitioner to his aid, and instructed him how to defend him. I think old Jones was a little disgusted to find the business was so easy and his client so honest. In fact, Elwin was so clearly innocent that Jones almost despised him, and could have found it in his heart to recommend him to plead "guilty!"

At the next sitting of the county magistrates in Spincaster, Elwin was brought up, and Scardrake appeared against him. The latter, feeling himself to be one of the local gentry, was about to take his place on the bench, in accordance with the rule in provincial towns, that respectable inhabitants can hardly be expected to conduct themselves like common prosecutors. But Scardrake had reckoned without his host. There was not a magistrate on the bench who did not know him—and to

know him was *not* to love him. The chairman leant over the desk, and said to the usher in a whisper, audible throughout the whole court—"Usher, show that person into his proper place!"

This gave intense delight to the spectators, many of whom had awaited Scardrake's arrival outside the court, and given him a warm welcome of groans and curses. When the usher, whose brother-in-law had been one of Scardrake's many victims, showed Scardrake, as if inadvertently, into the dock—as his "proper place"—there was still greater joy among the spectators, and "applause in the body of the court, which was" *not* "immediately suppressed!" The chairman appreciated the usher's grim practical joke too keenly to reprimand him for his mistake, so he merely set him right, and then Scardrake, having at last been conducted to his place, the proceedings began.

Scardrake detailed the attempt to rob him, with such omissions and additions as the patrol had suggested. The patrol himself—who had, on Mr. Jones's motion, been ordered out of the court, while Scardrake was giving his evidence—was the next witness. In the pressure of other business he had forgotten some details

of the story he had to tell, and had never supposed he would not hear Scardrake's evidence. Under these circumstances, it was scarcely surprising that the two accounts did not altogether tally, and when Jones, the irrepressible, began to cross-examine, the justices had occasion more than once to wag their heads wisely, but sadly, over the contradictions and discrepancies.

Then Jones called his witnesses, and scattered the Scardrake story to the winds. The master, the porter, the surgeon, and two of the wardsmen of the Spincaster Union, swore most positively to Elwin's having been in the sick ward there, not only on the night when Scardrake swore he attacked him, but for several days before and after!

Scardrake and his friend the patrol were considerably taken aback at this unexpected turn; and the latter took a mental note of all the witnesses against him, with an internal resolve to pay them out if ever an opportunity should offer.

The bench, of course, would have dismissed the case at once; but Jones interposed, and pleaded for a hearing.

In the course of their conversation about this case, Elwin had told Jones his original

history, and the part that Scardrake had played in it. Jones saw in this the chance for making a little capital on his own account. So when the bench proposed—there being no other cases to try—to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Jones appealed for a hearing on behalf of his much-injured client, who wished to know whether he had any remedy against Scardrake or the patrol, but more especially the former. The latter, Jones said, had erred in the excess of zeal which in his experience ("as a thieves' lawyer," said the patrol aside) was not uncommonly observable in the conduct and evidence of the constabulary. But the case against the prosecutor was more serious—the charge, in short, amounted to little less than conspiracy; and their worships would learn, if they would grant him a brief space to detail this poor fellow's story, that this was not the first time that Scardrake had pursued his client with vindictive cruelty of the deepest dye. And thereupon, the bench not demurring, he gave a short, and on the whole a pretty correct sketch of the downward career of Elwin, whom he described as "the unlucky scion of a distinguished house, the bearer of an illustrious name, who had been brought down by his own folly possibly—aided undoubtedly by the ras-

cality of others—to the lowest depths of penury and want—but not—be it said to his credit—not to crime!"

There was another sensation in the court at this, and a hoarse murmur, so threatening in sound that old Scardrake turned white, and looked nervously at the door.

The magistrates informed Mr. Jones that his client could either proceed for damages for false imprisonment, or indict for conspiracy, they thought. Whereupon they withdrew, and Mr. Jones popped his bag under his arm, and left also, having been ordered his costs by the bench.

Scardrake got roughly hustled, and was glad to take refuge in a cab from the increasing violence of the crowd.

Poor Elwin stole away unnoticed save by one person, a good-hearted fellow, who, happening to be way-warden in one of the suburbs of Spincaster, offered him work on the roads, which Elwin gladly accepted.

Mr. Jones accomplished the object for which he had made his address to the bench. He had done so without consulting Elwin, and he did not give him his reasons for taking that course afterwards. But the next day, Scardrake, whose opinion of human nature was not

a high one, but chanced to be a correct one in this instance, called upon Jones and offered him something handsome to let his client's case drop. Jones affected indignation, and declared that his client was so implacably bent on pressing the case against Mr. Scardrake that it was impossible to compromise it. The two beauties haggled and argued for some time, but Jones knew the strength of his position, and he compelled Scardrake to pay him a very large sum—part in compensation to Elwin, part as a fee for himself in consideration of his undertaking to advise and compel his client to a compromise.

It was scarcely a week after the events I have just recorded, when Scardrake, driving home in his high dog-cart with his stepping chestnut, found a group of men at work scraping the road. They did not move out of the way very rapidly, so he had to hold in his horse, much to that spirited animal's disgust, while he drove among the long scrapers—unfamiliar objects that did not tend to soothe the chestnut's sensitive nerves.

"Woa, lad! woa!" said Scardrake, not feeling at all certain of his control over the animal.

At the sound of his voice one of the men

looked up, and shook his fist at him with a muttered curse.

It was Elwin!—Elwin the worse for drink, as he always was now when he was earning a penny—a poor, ragged, dirty scarecrow, unsteady with liquor, and shaking with ague and cold.

Scardrake was not slow to respond with language to the full as violent as Elwin's, and he began to abuse him for the exorbitance of the claims which Jones had made.

All this while Scardrake was holding in the fidgetty chestnut, which kept forging ahead a step at a time, until, by slow degrees, it carried Scardrake beyond the spot where Elwin was standing.

Just at that moment Elwin said something which enraged Scardrake still more than ever, and at the same time made him suspect that Jones had made a dupe of him.

Hurling a good deal of fierce swearing at Elwin; in order to get nearer to him, so that he might hear more clearly, Scardrake turned his horse's head round, but did it so clumsily that he gave the animal the rein.

The fiery chestnut gave a plunge, and lashing out, bolted. There was a shout, and a scream, a heavy jolt of the dog-cart, and Scardrake knew

he had run over Elwin. He contrived to stop his horse, by dint of pulling its head nearly off, within a few paces of the accident.

The other men were lifting Elwin up. Scardrake saw with horror from the limp, lifeless drop of the limbs, that he had killed him!

"Here, come back. You've killed the chap," shouted the men. But a panic seized Scardrake, and instead of returning, he gave his horse its head, and the terrified animal tore off at headlong speed towards Spincaster.

Some of the road-menders had been present at the Court the other day, and knew the story of Elwin and Scardrake, as related by Jones. They at once set down Scardrake as a deliberate murderer.

"Turned his horse round and drove straight at him!" said one.

"Ay, struck him down with the butt end o' the whip," said a second, more imaginative.

Meanwhile, one tall, active young fellow had thrown off his ragged coat and waistcoat, and had tied his handkerchief round his waist.

"He's off to catch train," said he, in answer to the inquiring looks of the others. "I'm going to cut across the fields, shortest way to station!" and with that he was off like a greyhound.

CHAPTER VI.

HASSARD ONCE MORE ON THE WING.

After the temporary estrangement which resulted in the capture of Bertrand Metford, the course of true love bade fair to run with exceptional smoothness between Major Verner and the widow of the late unlamented Randeggar. In fact, they were so demonstrative, and displayed their mutual regard so publicly, that people wondered that no announcement of their marriage was made. Assuredly the widow was not to blame for this. She had frequently hinted, in the most unmistakable manner, that it was time a date was fixed for their union. In fact, she had been so plain and distinct on the point that she could only have become more distinct and plain by adopting the formula used by Betsy Jane of immortal memory, when the Yankee Showman was declaring his passion in too prolix and poetic a style, "If you mean hitchin', I'm in!"

Of course it was out of the question for a fine

lady like Mrs. Randeggar—and a diamond merchant's widow to boot—to use such terms as answered the purpose of Betsy Jane. But she went as near them as she could with propriety. The Major, however, hung back!

I cannot tell whether any lurking alarm at the thought of bigamy and its punishment induced him to hesitate, or some vague scheme for getting hold of some at least of the widow's wealth, without the encumbrance of the widow, kept him in a state of uncertainty. I incline to the latter alternative, for he used to talk about the impossibility of any man of refinement, or with a delicate sense of honour, marrying a lady with means, unless he had some property of his own that would at least exonerate him from the charge of unworthy and interested motives.

This lofty sentiment so touched the widow that she suggested shortly after that he should advise her how to invest a little spare cash. She did not require any interest—or very little—but she wished it to be in safe hands. By degrees she intimated that her faith in the Major was so great that she would prefer his taking up the loan, if it would not inconvenience him.

He protested it would be an ineffable boon

after his losses in the London and Lahore Bank. He had in his eye an investment which would give him a great and glorious return for the money, and enable him in a short time to assume his proper position in the world—one of which he would have no need to feel ashamed, and which would permit him to carry out the nearest and dearest wishes of his heart.

So he got the money, and we will charitably suppose was only prevented by uncontrollable circumstances from investing it as he had proposed. Instead of that he banked it, and on the strength of his banking account soon contrived to obtain credit, and get into a fair and gentlemanly amount of debt for faring sumptuously, and purchasing purple and fine linen.

In order, we will hope, not to worry Mrs. Randeggar with a long and detailed account of the circumstances which had prevented him from investing as he had told her he would, he gave her *couleur de rose* descriptions of the returns he was getting, and the money he was saving, and the house he meant to buy with it, and a host of other particulars—including a delicate adumbration of the lady who would be the mistress of that house!

And still the Major continued to be very

popular as the manager of the hotel. Everybody was delighted with him, and his character was so widely known that the new arrivals always asked for him, sure that he would see to their wants, wishes, and welfare.

Among these arrivals came the famous Washington P. Roots. Not to know Washington P. Roots is to argue yourself unknown, so I hasten to remind, rather than inform, my readers, that he was the greatest tragedian that America—and consequently the whole world—had produced. Indeed, it was the proud boast of bars and smoking-rooms that that bust-up, effete old world had never produced a tragedian who was worthy of the honour of blacking Mr. Roots's boots.

The great Roots was exceedingly genial and pleasant to the Major, for he knew the Major was an Englishman, and in spite of all that his friends and admirers said about Eu-*rope* being a bust-up and effete old cuss, Mr. Roots had a desire to learn what sort of reception he should receive in a small island which lies off the coast of that continent. He questioned the Major, and discussed the subject with him over a bottle of champagne.

The Major did not give the actor much encouragement. He informed him that in the

land of Shakespeare people did not care much for tragedies or tragedians, and he said he could not see what Mr. Roots had to gain by an experimental trip to England when he had so great a popularity in his own country.

To this the tragedian made reply by producing his pocket-book as if it had been a purloined will, or some such tragedy-property, and taking from its recesses, with much deliberation and an excess of gesture, a small newspaper clipping, which he laid on the table before the Major in a most solemn and impressive manner.

It was nothing more or less than the remarks —quoted in a previous chapter—of *Sock and Buskin* upon the return of the Lovely Leontine to America.

The Major forgot all about his argument with Mr. Roots, or that gentleman's thirst for knowledge. He sat dumb for a minute, and then gasped out an inquiry whether Mr. Roots could remember how long ago this appeared! On learning the date and calculating the length of the voyage, he saw that he had not a day to lose if he wished to escape the vengeance of the infuriate Leontine.

He left Mr. Roots, with his unsatisfied thirst for knowledge, and half a bottle of champagne;

and he retired to his own private room, and sat down to meditate on his next move.

He had promised to take Mrs. Randeggar to the theatre that night to see the first appearance of the great Washington P. Roots in *Othello;* but he was compelled to write a letter, putting off their visit till the next night, in consequence of a sudden and severe attack of illness.

Then he shut himself into his room, gave strict orders that he was not to be disturbed, and set himself seriously to the consideration of the new features in the case, introduced by the Lovely Leontine's return to America.

Could she have heard of his whereabouts? It was not impossible that the circumstances of Metford's capture might have reached her. Probably, Moss would learn all about it from Inspector Clegg, and inform her.

One thing he had no possible doubt about—that if she were on his track, it was with the same implacable desire for revenge that had actuated her in London. But in this respect he was mistaken. In London he had been a successful man, returning to his wife and prosperity, and deserting the Leontine in poverty. The tables were turned now, his riches had taken to themselves wings—he was an exile, alone, and struggling, while she was basking in

the smiles of Fortune. Under such circumstances, she would have been less than a woman had she not forgiven him—had she not desired to take him back and pardon him!

But of all this Major Verner—or Captain Hassard, not quite to lose sight of his real name under the *alias*—knew nothing. The Lovely Leontine to him was a pursuing fury and avenging spirit; and he felt that, all things considered it would be as well to disappear, and leave no traces behind him.

This notion once adopted, he began to plan and scheme how, when, and whither he should arrange his flight. Then it struck him that as he was obliged to do it in the most secret and clandestine manner, he was sure to be accused by the popular tongue in Boston of all sorts of frauds and misdoings. Why incur such charges for nothing? He felt as that unfortunate thief felt who was sentenced to be hanged for robbing a jeweller's shop—in the good old days when they hanged a man for almost anything—and who burst into a flood of tears when a list of stolen jewels was read over. To those who congratulated him on this evidence of his remorse, and of his assurance that his guilt could not escape its punishment, he sobbed out, with evidently genuine feeling, that it wasn't the

being hanged he was crying for, but the idea that such a splendid booty had been carried off —and that he had not been in the job.

The Captain was determined that he would be "in the job" if the respectable Bostonians passed sentence on him as a swindler and defaulter; so he began to cast about to see how the greatest amount of plunder could be collected.

That he must levy still further contributions on the widow Randeggar was one of his first determinations. To sack the hotel strong-box was another, and, if possible, to raise money at his Bank, as well as clear out his balance there, was a third. He set about these various plans the next day with coolness and deliberation.

First of all, he went to the widow, and explained to her that his illness of the previous night had been mental rather than bodily. In short, he must tell her—with what anguish of mind he could not describe—that he had lost all the money she had advanced him. He most ingeniously related how the investment had been proposed to him by a friend in New York; but that now he had learnt that the dividends that had been paid him were merely fictitious, sent to keep him quiet, while his friend was gambling with his money in the gold market.

The widow was terribly distressed at his loss, not so much because it was so much hard cash wasted, as because it to some extent threatened to prorogue the event on which she was counting so eagerly—her marriage to the fascinating Major. She had set her heart on that, and, indeed, by their long courtship, was to some extent compromised, though with her money to back her she would never have found much difficulty in buying a husband in the Matrimonial Market. But, as I have said, she had set her heart on the fascinating Major, who even now, when he was, in spite of his artful attempts to conceal the ravages of age, far from what is described as a chicken, nevertheless retained those pleasant and killing ways of his which had always made him such a favourite with the fair sex.

Of course the widow offered to replace the sum the Major had lost; but he, with assumed coyness, declined anything of the kind. He should never be able to repay what he had already borrowed. Certainly not, said the widow, if he would not try and recover his losses—for which purpose her wealth was at his disposal.

Eventually, after a great deal of friendly haggling, the Major agreed to become indebted

to the widow once more. In his gratitude for her kindness and consideration, he even went so far as to impress a chaste salute on her cheek, which would have flushed no doubt, if the natural tint could have shown through the opaque colour which overlaid it.

His next step was to visit the Bank, where he sought an interview with the manager. He was scarcely as successful with him as he had been with the widow, but he managed to effect a considerable loan nevertheless, on the plea that he was negotiating for the purchase of the hotel, which he was at present managing. A certain deposit was required, for which his own cash-in-hand was scarcely sufficient; but the business was one that brought in large immediate profits, and he would shortly be enabled to repay the loan, and in consideration of the inconvenience, could keep the hotel account with the Bank, removing it from a rival firm.

Having settled this to his satisfaction, he went the round of his tradespeople, and ordered in a great many luxuries and necessaries, giving it out that he was about to become proprietor of the hotel, had taken a large house, and was about to marry a lady of immense means. There was no necessity for him to be more precise in his terms, for the shopkeepers knew

all about the buxom widow; and, indeed, would long ago have been more pressing had they not counted on profiting by their patience, when he became the diamond merchant's successor.

There only remained one more *coup* to be effected—the sacking of the hotel strong-box. In order to guard against any surprise, he first put it about that he had lost the key, and ordered a strict search for it to be made all over the premises. Meanwhile, he removed all the available notes and cash into his portmanteau, and had all ready for the start.

That night a telegram reached him—its arrival had been carefully arranged for by himself. He went to the clerk, and asked him to see after his guests for a couple of hours, as he was called away for that space on urgent business. He then slipped quietly upstairs, and fetching down his portmanteau, stole out unobserved from a room with windows opening to the ground, and was speedily whirling away north in the express.

He did not return to the hotel that night, but a telegram to the clerk kept all suspicion at rest. He did not turn up next day, but still no doubts were expressed about his absence.

The next night Mrs. Randeggar waited hour after hour for the promised visit of the Major

to take her to see the immortal tragedian, Washington P. Roots — the most innocent cause of all this entanglement! At last she grew quite nervous, and sent her servant to the hotel to inquire after the Major. The answer was that he went away the previous evening, having been summoned by telegram, and had not yet returned. The widow at once concluded that his sudden departure was in some way connected with the defalcations of his false friend, so she was pacified if not pleased. And so another day went, and the Major's prolonged absence made people uneasy.

It so happened that the hotel clerk went down to the Bank at which the Major had kept his money, in order to oblige an old customer. Falling into conversation with one of the cashiers while he was waiting, he commented on the Major's continued absence, and the anxiety, not to say inconvenience, it caused at the hotel.

The cashier said he supposed that would be all put straight soon, when the Major had completed the purchase of the hotel, and returned as proprietor instead of manager. This was news, indeed, for the clerk—and news which he could not believe; for he was aware that only lately a large sum had been offered for

the hotel, and refused! How had the cashier heard of this? It had leaked out somehow from the head of the business, whereupon the clerk asked for an interview, which was readily granted.

The Bank-manager, after questioning the clerk, and finding in his answers sufficient cause for alarm, dropped all ceremony, and described his last transactions with the Major.

"Skedaddled, by thunder!" said the clerk. "Wait a moment! I'll be back in a twinkle, and tell you more!"

He hurried off to the hotel, went straight to the manager's room, drew his revolver, placed it at the keyhole of the safe, and fired!

There was a report and a crash, and the strong-box door flew open. There was nothing in it save the smoke of the pistol and a few inconvertible securities.

Back went the clerk to the Bank-manager, and the two next proceeded to call on Mrs. Randeggar, from whom the former knew the Major had obtained his money—though whether honestly or no he was now at a loss to decide.

Mrs. Randeggar was furious, not so much at the loss of her money, as at the thought of her having been the victim of a designing scoundrel!

There was much telegraphing and counter-telegraphing—there was racing and chasing by acute detectives—but that lost hotel-manager ne'er did they see! He had got too good a start! Besides, he knew how to bolt—for it was not the first nor the second time that he had shown difficulties a clean pair of heels—he was, in fact, a regular bird-of-passage! Who shall put salt on the tail of the swallow, or how shall a man persuade the nightingale to abandon its annual migration? Is it not written in the Natural History of Rascals that the Hassard (*Caitiffius Vagabundus*, or Wandering Ne'er-do-weel) is a wary bird, the season of whose migration has not hitherto been discovered, and whose flight is as silent as that of the white owl, to which it bears some resemblance in its predatory habits?

The fact was that Captain Hassard had betaken himself to Canada, and there contrived to lose himself.

There he lay *perdu* for some time, keeping very quiet and retired, until the search for him should have lost its first freshness and energy.

Meanwhile, the fair Leontine, before opening her season at New York, took a rapid run to Boston, but only to find that the bird was

flown. She made inquiries about him, and was not slow in finding out how he had victimized Mrs. Randeggar. But with a truly feminine spirit, instead of feeling any sympathy for this fresh victim of the Captain's inconstancy, she merely said she was a vain old fool, and ought to have known better than to suppose that all her wealth could have bound a man like the Captain to such a raddled old wreck as she was!

CHAPTER VII.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

It is not impossible that the capture of murderers or other criminals—when such a capture arises under circumstances that make people wonder how the fugitives, instead of effecting their escape, seem to blunder into the grasp of justice—is more easily explainable than appears at first sight. My solution of the matter is, that they are more concerned about what they are flying from than what they are flying to! They are looking behind them, instead of ahead; and just as your small thief, caught trying to rob a till, bolts out of the shop with a retrospective eye of terror on the shopkeeper, and runs straight into the arms of the policeman outside, so these more dignified criminals rush away headlong from the results of their crime, more anxious to get out of its sight than to escape to any particular refuge. So, instead of going straight away, they run in circles—owing, I suppose, to the reputed habit

a man's right leg has, when not specially guided, of outstriding the left—and so are seized not far from the scene of their crime or their disaster.

I mention disaster, because it was from a disaster that Scardrake was flying, as fast as the chestnut could take him, when we saw him last. Whatever may be the case with other persons similarly situated, he, at any rate, was thinking only of getting out of eye-shot of the limp, lifeless body of the victim of his mishap, and had not the remotest idea of whither he directed his flight. The chestnut being left to himself, after he had tired of the pace at which he first went off, and not finding his driver trying to pull him in, slackened speed on his own account, though he still spun along far faster than Scardrake would have considered safe, had he been sufficiently collected to notice how the horse was going.

"They ain't been tryin' it on again in open daylight?" was the comment of the mounted patrol as the yellow dog-cart flashed by him. But Scardrake did not heed him or return his salute.

The turnpike-keeper heard the wheels coming along so rapidly he ran to his door thinking somebody was meditating to "bilk the pike."

When he saw it was Scardrake he, of course, dismissed that notion, for Scardrake had paid already; but he did not turn in again at once. He watched the dog-cart go by, wondering at the unusual pace.

"The devil's behind old Skinflint, I guess," was his commentary; and not a bad shot either, for the devil-to-pay *was* behind Scardrake.

Other people who knew the usurer stopped and looked back as he passed, for though many and many a charge was urged against Scardrake in Spincaster, hitherto nobody had accused him of furious driving.

The chestnut spanked along at his own free will, and being left "with all the world before him where to choose his place of rest," bethought him, very naturally, of "The George" and its stables. Thither, accordingly, he bent his way, and after nearly running over one or two people, turned into the yard so sharply that he almost upset the trap.

The jolt seemed to rouse Scardrake, but he was not quite himself in spite of the shock. He got down from his seat, and went indoors without heeding or answering the ostler's question whether he should take the horse out.

"Old Screwy's been drinking," said the

ostler, whose organ of veneration, never too prominent, had not been stimulated by any considerable outward application of silver to the palm, in Scardrake's case—"Here—hold the hoss, Bill, while I run arter him."

He overtook Scardrake just at the door, and called him by name to stop him. Scardrake jumped as if he had been shot: then, seeing who it was, cursed the ostler, and in answer to the question, whether the horse was to be taken out, roared "No!" without really understanding what the question was.

Meanwhile, Fate, in the shape of the young road-mender, was approaching with rapid strides. He reached the railway station, and soon learned that Scardrake, who was well known there, had not left by train. His next step was to report the "murder" at the police-station. The first thing the inspector did was to despatch a mounted officer to the scene of the calamity, to report on the truth of the young road-mender's charge.

The constable galloped off, and came upon the men who were carrying the body into Spincaster as they were conversing with the turnpike-man. The latter was noticing the speed at which Scardrake had driven by, and his remarks were corroborated by the patrol who

had turned back on meeting with the mournful procession.

Giving directions that the body should be taken to a small inn at the entrance of the town, the mounted officer rode back with the information he had collected to the inspector.

"It looks ugly," said the inspector, when he had heard all, including the statement of some of the bearers, that the murdered man was the one whom Scardrake had recently charged with attempted robbery, "Matthews, go and acquaint the coroner. I'll go myself to Mr. Sanderson, and see what he says."

Mr. Sanderson was the nearest justice, and he, on hearing what the inspector had to say, considered it was a case in which he was justified in making out a warrant for the arrest of Scardrake.

The inspector then set about trying to discover Scardrake's whereabouts; and he was not long at fault. A constable who had seen the narrow escape of a woman and child from being run over by the chestnut as it whipped round the corner of the lane where "The George" was situated, had watched Scardrake till he turned into the inn, under the impression that he was drunk.

As I have already stated, it was the chestnut

and not Scardrake that had elected to go to "The George." But finding himself there, Scardrake went into the coffee-room, and sat down to try and collect his scattered senses. The room was empty, so he could think in quiet. But the more he thought the less he seemed to see what was the best course to take. At last he made a violent effort to shake off the paralyzing effects of the shock.

"Brandy!" he muttered to himself—and went towards the bell to ring for the waiter; then suddenly changing his mind, as if he felt the solitude oppressive, he put on his hat and went into the bar, and ordered a glass of hot brandy-and-water, which was served to him, amid the scowls and scarcely concealed disgust of those assembled there. But Scardrake was too preoccupied to notice the angry looks directed towards him, and it was not, therefore, because of them that his hand shook so, as he took the glass, that the spoon played a little *tremolo* on the side.

Before he could raise the liquor to his lips, the door opened and a new-comer entered. It was the inspector, and though, of course, Scardrake did not divine the object of the visit, never supposing that the news of Elwin's death could have reached Spincaster yet, he felt ill at

ease; and a sudden qualm arrested the glass half-way.

The inspector noted this, but he was too experienced an officer to allow any one to observe that he had even seen Scardrake. He walked up to the bar so as to place one of its frequenters between him and his man, and over the shoulder of this innocent stalking-horse he fixed his eye on Scardrake, waiting to see the effect of what he was going to say.

"Fine day, Miss Button," said he to the barmaid. "Sad thing this that's just happened."

"Dear me," said Miss Button. "And what's that, pray, Mr. Inspector?"

"A murder!"

Crash!—it was Scardrake's untasted glass of brandy-and-water.

"Ah, that's it?" said the inspector quietly, slipping round his covering man, and confronting Scardrake. "I want you—for the murder of Herbert Elwin—here's the warrant!"

Scardrake did not speak—he held up his hands in a sort of feeble deprecatory way, as if he was trying to push away the accusation like some tangible thing that was going to strike him.

At first the surprise kept all who were present silent, and for awhile the crushed and

helpless figure, and the trembling, feeble gestures of the grey-headed man, commanded a sort of respect. But then came the recollection that this cowed wretch was that villain, old Scardrake, and there rose a threatening, hoarse murmur.

The inspector understood its meaning, so he slipped his arm through Scardrake's, and led him out.

"Come along! Don't resist!" was all he said, in a low whisper.

When he got his prisoner outside the door, there were two constables standing there.

"Don't let any of 'em out just yet, or they'll be for lynching him," he whispered rapidly, and hurried Scardrake away.

The precaution was not an idle one. They had not gone twenty paces ere the bar-door was flung open, and one or two men with flushed faces were coming out, when they saw the constables and stopped.

"Come on, boys," cried a voice behind them, from some one who did not see the cause of their hesitation. "Let's swim the old devil in the river!"

The constables, however, blocked the door, and pacified the excited drinkers as they best could; and so the inspector contrived to lodge

his prisoner in safety before the news of the murder and Scardrake's arrest had spread far.

Scardrake still remained in a sort of half-imbecile state, and had only just enough sense left to send for Jones, to defend him. But when Jones came, instead of giving him instructions, he began to complain that Jones had swindled him out of the money he had paid as compensation for Elwin, which Elwin had never received. This was not calculated to enlist Jones's sympathy warmly, so he declined to defend him, when at last Scardrake proposed to give him instructions.

Jones had not been "thieves' lawyer" for so many years not to have acquired some experience in the art his clients practised. He saw in a moment that, now Elwin was dead, the secret of the money transactions between himself and Scardrake was safe. He had only to deny that there had been any dealings beyond the payment of costs, and he could defy Scardrake to disprove his statement. The interview wound up stormily, and Jones departed, assuring Scardrake that so far from defending him, he should use his best endeavours to further the ends of justice by bringing him to the scaffold.

Scardrake secured the services of another

lawyer, who had a good, respectable practice, and was therefore a little out of his element in such a case—to say nothing of the fact that, in common with all Spincaster, he believed Scardrake guilty, and not only that, but felt a repugnance for him as the man who had ruined so many of his fellow-townsmen and friends.

There was a great crowd at the Court when Scardrake was brought before the magistrates, and it was necessary to employ a large force of police to guard the prisoner from violence on his way from the lock-up. The Bench put on their most severe air—country justices are always trying to look like Solons—and gave it out that if there were any disturbances they should order the Court to be cleared; and this was so far successful that silence was fairly kept during the proceedings, which all were too anxious to witness to risk being excluded for disorder.

First of all, before the proceedings had been formally commenced, one of the magistrates, old Major Achmuty—commonly known in Spincaster as Major Muddypate, from the obtuseness of his intellect—handed to the clerk a letter which had been addressed to the Bench, and which he had opened as being the first magistrate to arrive. In handing the letter to the clerk, the Major very unnecessarily ex-

plained what it was about, for the edification of those in Court. It was a rather irregular and indeed improper course, but country justices have strange ways, and the Major was a very "country justice" sort of man; and he delighted to hear himself speak—or rather gobble, for he spoke very like a Turkey just about Christmas-time—in his judicial capacity!

The letter, he said, was from one Benjamin Boshier, who dated from a street in Soho in London, and stated that he was connected with the theatrical profession—that he had known the murdered man as an *employé* at the Leicester Theatre, of which the prisoner was then proprietor, and that he had been witness of a violent altercation and struggle between the two, which had ended in the accused taking a solemn oath to have the other's heart's blood. If their worships considered his evidence of any importance, the aforesaid Benjamin Boshier expressed his readiness to come forward and give it, always provided his expenses were paid. The Major said he was sure "Mr. Clerk" would know how to act upon that communication; and the clerk, who was a lawyer, said he did, inwardly confounding the Major for making the contents of the letter public.

The evidence was unpleasantly strong against old Scardrake, when at last the case was opened. His *animus* towards the deceased was remembered to have been, as it were, proved in the recent case before the magistrates by Mr. Jones, who was present on this occasion also, and acted as *amicus curiæ* with considerable zeal. The road-menders gave their testimony clearly enough—they had heard the two using high words, and had seen Scardrake turn his horse and drive over Elwin. One of them believed he struck him over the head with the butt of his whip. All agreed that when called upon to stop he only drove off the more furiously. Then came the mounted policeman and the turnpike man to describe the speed at which Scardrake drove past them. The last evidence was that of the ostler at "The George," who said he was ordered not to take the horse out. All agreed that Scardrake seemed much agitated and nervous.

Scardrake's lawyer struggled against this weight of testimony in vain. Of course his line was to represent the death of Elwin as the result of an accident. But he had no witness —Scardrake's mouth was closed, and the road-menders were not to be shaken in their universal declaration, that the prisoner drove over

the deceased with malice aforethought and deliberation.

Finding this defence was breaking down, the lawyer tried another tack, and endeavoured to elicit that Elwin had threatened Scardrake. But in that too he failed, and so, as a last resource, he had to argue that, even supposing his client had driven over Elwin on purpose, it was done in the heat of passion suddenly roused, and that, therefore, the crime did not amount to more than manslaughter. But here again there was the evidence of an old feud between the two, and—more difficult still for him to combat, since it was not in reality before the court, though its influence told upon it—there was the letter of Benjamin Boshier, of Soho, affirming that Scardrake had taken a solemn oath to have Herbert Elwin's life-blood.

The prisoner's lawyer, it was admitted on all sides, did his very best for his client, but neither he nor any one else was astonished to find that the magistrates, after laying their heads together for some minutes, declared that they were of opinion that there was sufficient evidence to warrant the committal of Elias Scardrake for the wilful murder of Herbert Elwin.

The day after, the coroner's inquest on the

body of Herbert Elwin was held at the "Blue Lion," to which it had been conveyed by direction of the police. The usual passage-of-arms between the coroner and the justices as to the bringing-up of the prisoner before the former after committal by the latter, was on this occasion waived; and Scardrake was carried before Mr. Eyre Kingdon, the county coroner, and his jury of twelve good Spincastrians and true!

The evidence was much the same as that before the magistrates on the previous day, with the exception that Colonel the Hon. Ralph Auberon Elwin, a distant relative of the deceased, volunteered as a witness, and identified the body.

Colonel the Hon. Ralph Auberon Elwin resided on his estate, the Waldrons, not far from Spincaster; and it was in the hope, as a last resource, of obtaining aid from him that Herbert Elwin had made his way to this part of the world. The Colonel, however, like the rest of the family, had long since disowned him, and would not assist him in the slightest degree, and consequently Elwin, worn out with his tramp, and weakened by his intemperate habits, fell ill, and went into the infirmary of the Spincaster Union.

Now that the poor wretch was dead, the Colonel thought it right to own him, so he came before the Coroner, and declared that the body which he had just seen was that of Herbert Elwin, at one time an officer in the army, who was a distant relative of his, but had fallen into evil ways and habits of dissipation, which had led to his being estranged from the family. He had, said the Colonel, a bright career before him, but had unfortunately fallen into the clutches of usurers and money-lenders—the Colonel said this with evident meaning, and somebody at the back of the court uttered an audible "aside" about old Skinflint and old Cent.-per-Cent.—these persons, the Colonel went on to observe, had encouraged his vices and follies in order to prey upon him, or his relations, and had been the cause of his miserable end.

The Coroner, who rather liked dining with the " swells " of the district, complimented the Colonel on his noble unselfishness in thus coming forward, and by a side-wind, in which he commented on the known liberality of the Colonel, suggested that it was not difficult to guess what object had induced the deceased to come to Spincaster and remain in the neighbourhood.

The jury, without any hesitation, pronounced a verdict of "guilty of wilful murder" against Elias Scardrake; and the unhappy wretch was taken back again to gaol to await the coming of the Assizes.

The time intervening between Scardrake's committal and the opening of the Assizes was spent both by prosecution and defence in hunting up evidence to strengthen the case on either side. But old Scardrake seemed stunned, and could hardly be prevailed upon to take any interest in the preparation of the defence, though it was a matter of life and death to him. "Conscious guilt" was the general opinion expressed by the gaolers and others about the prison.

Time, who, whether he ambles, trots, or gallops, as Rosalind tells us, nevertheless sooner or later covers the ground somehow, brought at last the Assize week at Spincaster. For awhile that depressed town forgot its wretchedness and assumed a gay appearance. The damsels planned bewitching garments wherewith to flaunt in the eyes of the members of the Bar, lodging-house keepers bethought them of the high rates they could make the barristers pay, old fogies began to think of dining with the judges, and the young sparks to pray that

some friendly counsel would invite them to the Bar Mess. Everybody grew brisk and lively at the thought of the arrival of the Judges in their grand carriages, with the javelin men and all the rest of the twopenny pageantry with which Spincaster did honour to the representatives of Majesty and Justice.

Some of the prisoners awaiting trial, even, were glad that their suspense was at an end, and that in a few days the uncertainty would be over, and their fate settled one way or the other.

But Scardrake was not one of these. He trembled at the clash of bells that hailed the arrival of the Judges, and spent a sleepless night—afraid to close his eyes for fear of the awful black visions that would rise before them. He knew he was innocent, but he saw how fearfully all the facts arrayed themselves against him, and he could not conceal from himself that if the scaffold was to be his fate, it was he who had shaped the timbers for it, he who had twined the rope, in days long since when he was plotting evil against others. He was a completely broken man—so prostrated that his lawyer, who had begun in disgust with him, began to feel pity for him, and indeed was quite convinced of his innocence.

As I have said, he was a respectable lawyer, and a clever one, though he had not much experience in criminal cases. However, he set himself to work to prepare his brief as well as he could, and he determined to instruct first-rate counsel in order to give his client every possible chance.

The Assizes were duly opened on Monday, the Judges having attended divine service at St. Mary's on the Sunday. Lord Blaydon took the Civil side, and Sir Minto Farquhar the Crown Court. Sir Minto had been leading counsel for years on this very circuit, had been subsequently Solicitor-General, and would, it was believed, be the next Lord Chief Justice. He was a sound lawyer, and by no means an obdurate judge.

In his charge to the Grand Jury, his Lordship referred at some length to Scardrake's case—"there will come before you the depositions in a case, in which one Elias Scardrake is charged with having wilfully caused the death of Herbert Elwin. It appears that a grudge existed between the two of some years' standing, which had been aggravated by certain legal proceedings, and that on their meeting some days after they came to high words, and the result of the quarrel was

that Elwin was knocked down and killed by the horse and vehicle which Scardrake was driving. Of course, if you consider that the act bears appearance of malice and predisposition, you will find a true bill on the count of wilful murder, but should you consider the death was the result of accident, you will throw out the bill."

The Grand Jury happened to include several of the justices who had tried the case among its number; and, therefore, as may be supposed, a true bill was found without much delay; and Elias Scardrake was duly indicted for the wilful murder of Herbert Elwin, being also charged with the same offence upon the Coroner's inquisition.

The prisoner, on being called upon to plead, did not at first answer, and appeared to be in a bewildered state. On the clerk of the arraigns repeating the question, he seemed suddenly to recollect himself, and not without effort pleaded "Not Guilty."

Serjeant Shillito and Mr. Gauntlett conducted the prosecution, and Mr. Mirehouse, Q.C. (who was specially retained), and Mr. Adnutt appeared for the defence.

Serjeant Shillito was noted for the suasive powers of his eloquence with juries. He was

great at Breach of Promise cases, and scarcely less successful in his conduct of criminal prosecutions. Mr. Gauntlett, his junior, was a gentleman whose limited acquaintance with attorneys had kept him for many years in the shade. When he got a brief—which was but seldom—he worked at it energetically in hopes of attracting attention, but, as a rule, his senior availed himself of any points he had discovered, so that Gauntlett's talent was still, to a great extent, unrecognized. But he was a useful second, and Serjeant Shillito was not at all sorry to have his assistance.

Mr. Mirehouse was the invariable opponent of the Serjeant. It was hard to say which was the better man even now, though the struggle had been going on for years. In every important case in which it was felt necessary to have the best counsel on circuit, the one side invariably engaged either Mirehouse or Shillito, and the opposite party rushed off at once to secure his natural opponent.

Out of Court they were the best of friends—indeed, they formed a sort of exclusive set of two, rather to the disgust of the minor members of the circuit. But in Court they used to fight like wild cats. To see them cocking their wigs, shaking their gowns, and brandishing

their fore-fingers or their briefs at one another, you would have imagined that directly the case was over, they must adjourn and have it out with fists or pistols in the courtyard outside the Town Hall.

The only other matter, besides legal proceedings, on which they differed, rather than disagreed, was the matter of politics. The Serjeant was a Conservative, and the Q.C. a Liberal, so the probability was that in time they would get into Parliament, there to fight their battles on a different ground, and, mayhap, become each in his turn law-officer of the Crown, with all the vista of bench or woolsack, of which that elevated position entails a prospect.

Serjeant Shillito opened the case with a statement of the facts, and a rapid *résumé* of the evidence that would be adduced. He wound up with a touching description of the gradual decline and ruin of the murdered man, and a stern denunciation of the persecution he had endured at the hands of the prisoner, over whose enduring hatred and unwearying pursuit of vengeance which resembled

> The wolf's long gallop that can tire,
> The hound's deep hate, the huntsman's fire,

he poured the most scathing condemnation. Then he sat down apparently exhausted by the storm of his own emotion, and the first witness was called and examined by Mr. Gauntlett.

Peter Rooksby, labourer, deposed that he was employed on the roads. Elwin was also employed there. Remembered the afternoon of the 12th February when the prisoner drove up and spoke to Elwin. Did not hear what passed between them, but they were evidently quarrelling. Prisoner suddenly pulled his horse round and drove straight at Elwin. Was quite sure it was done intentionally. The road was plenty wide enough for him to pass. After Elwin was knocked down, assisted to raise him, and saw he was dead. Called out to prisoner to stop, for he had killed the man, but he drove off as fast as he could.

Now came Mr. Mirehouse's turn to cross-examine, and he set about it with a will.

Mr. Mirehouse: Come, my good man, you say prisoner drove off when you told him he'd killed the man, and asked him to come back. What would you have done in his place?

Rooksby (with a laugh): I believe I should ha' done the same.

Hereupon the Serjeant interposed. They were not there to put hypothetical cases—it

was not a question what the witnesses would have done under certain circumstances, but what the prisoner actually did do.

Mr. Mirehouse said his learned brother was exciting himself unnecessarily—he would not press the question any further.

"Now, my friend," he continued, turning to the witness, "you describe yourself as a labourer. Have you ever had to do with horses?"

Witness: No!

Mr. Mirehouse: You never drove any vehicle—either your own or any other person's?

Witness: No!

Mr. Mirehouse: You're a little timid about horses then, I suppose?

Witness: I like to give 'em a clear berth.

Mr. Mirehouse: You gave prisoner's horse a clear berth, eh?

Witness: Pretty well!

Mr. Mirehouse: Pretty well! And you don't know anything about driving—you have never driven horses?

Witness: No, I've never had to do so, or I would have done it.

Mr. Mirehouse: And done it well, no doubt—under the circumstances, as those gentlemen

(pointing to the jury) will no doubt believe. I have done with you!

Here the Serjeant rose, and re-examined his man.

Serjeant: You were quite near enough to see that the horse's head was towards Elwin?

Witness: Yes—straight towards him!

Serjeant: You have seen a good deal of driving if you have not driven yourself?

Witness: Yes—same as most people!

The Serjeant ordered this witness down, and the next witness was called.

Thomas Denny, labourer, deposed to much the same facts as Rooksby. He added, however, that the prisoner pulled the horse to the "near side" in order to run over Elwin.

Mr. Mirehouse, in cross-examining this man, did not ask him what he knew of horses. "If you were sitting in the gig in prisoner's place," said he, "would Elwin have been on your left hand or your right?"

Witness (after some consideration): My right.

Mr. Mirehouse (turning to the jury): Elwin, he says, was on the prisoner's *right* hand, and the prisoner he declares pulled to the *near* side, gentlemen!

On Mr. Mirehouse resuming his seat, the

Serjeant sprang to his feet: Do *you* know about horses, witness?

Witness: No—very little!

Serjeant: Have you ever driven?

Witness: Once or twice!

The Serjeant told the witness he might stand down, but a juror wished to ask him a question. The question was put, and was an inquiry as to the witness's ordinary occupation before he was reduced to road-work. The reply was that he had been a journeyman tailor, and it elicited a laugh. Mr. Mirehouse turned round and looked hard at the jury. That question had been put with *malice prepense* by a man who knew the answer, and was prejudiced.

The next witness, John Hibbit, labourer, deposed to the same facts as the other, with the additional evidence that he saw Scardrake raise his right arm with the whip, and strike Elwin with the butt-end.

Mr. Mirehouse, in cross-examination, elicited that this witness was behind the gig when it was turned round just before running over Elwin.

Mr. Mirehouse: You saw prisoner raise the whip?

Witness: Yes. I saw him put it over his shoulder, so!

Mr. Mirehouse: Just show us in which direction he struck.

The witness here made a motion in imitation of the blow, which may be described briefly as "Cut No. 1" in broadsword exercise—that is, from the right shoulder diagonally towards the left.

Mr. Mirehouse: He struck like that when Elwin is described to have been standing on his right?

The witness was confused, and hesitated.

Mr. Mirehouse: How do you know it was the butt-end of the whip he raised?

Witness: Because I could see the lash hanging down in front.

Mr. Mirehouse: What—when his back was towards you?

Witness: No—before his back was turned—at least, just as he was turning it.

Mr. Mirehouse: That will do! I don't want to waste time in fencing with a witness of your class. (To the jury.) He says, you will observe, gentlemen, that the prisoner raised the butt-end of his whip before turning the horse—when, in fact, his back was towards Elwin!

Samuel Tothill, the next witness, merely deposed to running to Spincaster with the information. He was standing too far off

to see the altercation, but saw Elwin run over, and Scardrake drive off without regarding the cry to him to stop. He was not cross-examined.

The inspector came next, and what he said was substantiated by Miss Button, so far as the incidents of the arrest were concerned. The turnpike-man was called to prove that Scardrake was driving very fast — unusually fast—after the occurrence.

Mr. Mirehouse had not examined the inspector or Miss Button, for he declared the conduct of the prisoner was quite compatible with the theory of his innocence—his perturbation was due to the sudden accusation. But he tackled the 'pikeman severely.

Mr. Mirehouse: You ought to know something about driving—merely as an eye-witness. Was prisoner in the habit of driving rapidly—recklessly?

Turnpike-keeper: No. He was a careful driver—I should say a timid driver.

Mr. Mirehouse: Will you swear the horse in this instance had not bolted with him?

Turnpikeman: If it had I should have expected him to call to me to stop it!

Mr. Mirehouse: You wouldn't stop a runaway horse unless called on to do so?

Turnpike-man: Not if any one was driving it!

The patrol followed, and was very roughly handled by Mr. Adnutt with regard to his share in the charge of robbery brought against Elwin by Scardrake, the object being to induce the patrol to admit that he got up the case with a view to acquiring credit for ingenuity and energy. The cross-examination of the groom of "The George"—whose evidence was the same as before the magistrates—also fell to Mr. Adnutt. But when Mr. Petrie was called, Mr. Mirehouse at once pricked up his ears.

Mr. Petrie was the previous owner of Scardrake's chestnut. He deposed that he had bred the horse himself, but had parted with it in consequence of reducing his establishment. Had driven the animal frequently—had, in fact, broken it himself. It was very quiet, and easy to drive. It had a tender mouth, so that a child's hand could guide it.

Mr. Mirehouse: You bred the horse! I suppose you know a good deal about horses?

Mr. Petrie: I have been accustomed to them all my life.

Mr. Mirehouse: You even break in horses?

Witness: For my own amusement—my own riding! Certainly.

Mr. Mirehouse: This horse is a handsome, showy horse, I believe. Good action?

Witness: Very!

Mr. Mirehouse: A good goer?

Witness: A capital goer! Very free!

Mr. Mirehouse: Not quite the horse you would let any one drive, if you wanted to keep its knees unblemished?

Witness: Perhaps so!

Mr. Mirehouse: Come, I ask you—honestly—are not chestnut horses more fidgetty and apt to shy than others?

Witness: Yes, they are—but this horse——

Mr. Mirehouse: Thank you! Be good enough to answer my questions.

Serjeant Shillito: Really, my Lord, unless my learned brother wishes to have the horse produced in Court——

Mr. Mirehouse: I appeal to your Lordship, if this line of cross-examination is not quite proper. The learned serjeant has summoned this witness to prove that the horse is quite quiet, and inferentially, therefore, that it did not bolt with the prisoner, and run over Elwin by accident.

Sir Minto Farquhar: Possibly, Brother Shillito, our learned brother is pressing the questions too far in legal strictness; but as

the character of the horse is concerned, I think we may allow him a little latitude—*in equite!*

At this joke there was immense laughter among the barristers, in which, however, the public did not join. Let us hope that this exclusive enjoyment of the witticism by the bar was due to the fact that the public did not understand Latin.

The next witness called was Mr. Jones, who deposed to the story of Elwin's connection with Scardrake, as told him by the former. Mr. Mirehouse knew well enough that a lawyer is always a splendid witness to cross-examine, and he turned the unfortunate practitioner inside-out, and sent him away howling.

The last witness was Benjamin Boshier, who, as "super" at "The Leicester," had heard Scardrake's awful threats to have Elwin's blood. This statement created a great sensation in Court. But Mr. Mirehouse was equal to the occasion.

Mr. Mirehouse: Now, Mr. Boshier, you have adorned the dramatic profession for many years. These gentlemen have had no experience of the stage. Will you kindly enlighten them on a few points? The prisoner was proprietor, lessee, or manager of "The Leicester"?

Witness: Yes, sir.

Mr. Mirehouse: In the course of your theatrical experience, have you not found that, as a rule, all managers swear, more or less?

Witness: Most on 'em do!

Mr. Mirehouse: They are compelled to, are they not?

Witness: They've enough to make 'em swear sometimes!

Mr. Mirehouse: If a careless fellow set fire to a theatre, for instance, you would consider a manager justified in using strong language to him?

Witness: Certainly!

Mr. Mirehouse: When prisoner swore at Elwin, had not Elwin caused a conflagration that nearly destroyed the theatre?

Witness: It was strongly suspected.

Mr. Mirehouse: One more question. Did you not write and volunteer evidence in this case, provided your expenses were paid?

Witness: Well, you see——

Mr. Mirehouse: Don't shuffle, sir. Yes, or No! Did you, or did you not, offer to come as a witness for money consideration?

Witness (reluctantly): I did!

Here the Serjeant rose, and re-examined witness, eliciting from him that he was an intimate friend of Elwin's—had got him em-

ployment at the theatre, and had warned him of Scardrake's fury, and recommended him to run away.

Mr. Mirehouse then addressed the jury for the defence. On what did the evidence for the prosecution rest? On the testimony of road-scrapers, who scarcely knew a horse from a cow, and were totally ignorant of driving. He then commented at length on the discrepancies and contradictions in their evidence. He denounced both Jones and Boshier as influenced by the basest motives, and ridiculed the allegations of the patrol and the turnpike-man. As for Mr. Petrie, that gentleman had given his evidence fairly enough, but it was clear the horse he sold the prisoner was a fiery half-broken animal, which Mr. Petrie—accustomed all his life to horses—could drive, but which it was plain, from the evidence of the prosecution's own witnesses, the prisoner was unable to drive, and of which he was frightened. No, the fact was the horse had taken fright at the road-scrapers—and quite justifiably he thought the jury would say after seeing some of them in the witness-box. The prisoner had been unable to hold it, and it ran away with him, after running over Elwin. He then dwelt on the prisoner's refraining from any attempt

to escape after reaching Spincaster, and wound up with an appeal to the jury if they did not believe—and he could not think they would believe—that the act was a wilful and premeditated one, to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt.

Sir Minto Farquhar summed up. The issue to which the whole case was narrowed was the credibility of the four first witnesses. The horse might or might not be frisky, for a clumsy driver would run over a man with a steady horse. But did these road-men see enough of the action to judge, or know enough about driving to enable them to say whether the prisoner tried to run over Elwin or not? His Lordship seemed to think they were not to be relied upon entirely. He dismissed the question of motive briefly, saying that it did not always follow because A threatened B that he meant really to kill him—that, indeed, loud talkers seldom proceed to deeds. It would be for the jury to say whether they thought the first witnesses were correct in their description of the affray—in which case they would find the prisoner guilty. But if they had any doubt in their minds, the prisoner was entitled to the benefit of that doubt.

The jury withdrew. A buzz of commentary

rose from the bar table. Everybody considered the summing-up strongly in the prisoner's favour, and all were loud in their praises of Mirehouse's mode of conducting the defence.

"Hush!" The jury are coming back into Court. Knowing ones say that so brief an absence means acquittal. The clerk of the arraigns asked the jury whether they had agreed on their verdict. "We have," said the Foreman. "We find the prisoner Guilty!"

It came like a thunderclap upon the whole Court—that is to say, the legal portion of the Court—the spectators, being Spincastrians, had all along made up their minds that Scardrake was guilty, so they were not surprised.

"Didn't expect it," whispered the Serjeant to the Q.C.

All eyes were fixed on the prisoner. He had been nervous and anxious at first, but seemed to have gathered courage from the speech of his counsel and the Judge's summing up.

When he was asked if he had anything to urge why sentence of death should not be passed on him, he rose, and in a hoarse, low voice — audible, nevertheless, throughout the Court—he said, raising one trembling hand to Heaven — "It was an accident, so help me God!"

The Judge, who had been almost as much surprised as the prisoner at the verdict, proceeded to pass sentence, but his address was brief, and he did not make the usual allusion to "a patient and impartial trial," or say anything about "an intelligent jury." As the last awful words "Dead—dead—dead!" came from his lips, the prisoner fell forward, as if their very sound had killed him.

The Court adjourned. As the judge hurried out of Court into his private room, he stopped to speak to a friend, who lived in the neighbourhood of Spincaster.

"Very queer fellows you've got here for jurymen," said his Lordship; "that verdict wasn't at all what I expected."

"You'll find them too easy in other cases, but that fellow has been the *bête noir* of the place —the ruin of scores of families. If an angel from Heaven had come down and proved him innocent, they would have found him guilty in spite of it!"

Scardrake had sown the wind. He was now reaping the whirlwind.

CHAPTER VIII.

LANCELOT'S LABOUR LOST.

It will be a pleasant change after the musty law-court, in which we have been compelled to sit of late, to go and pay a visit to the Oldhams at their little cottage in the Colony. So with my readers' permission we will give them a call to see how the world has been treating them while we have been oscillating between Spincaster and the United States.

The cottage has by this time acquired the indescribable something which gives a house the look of home! What the indescribable something is I do not know, but there is no mistaking its effect. Wanting it, a house is but a carcase of bricks and mortar, without a soul. It is a thing one cannot, however, pack up with one's furniture and remove to one's new residence. Like the evergreens and fruit-trees one has planted, it must be left behind at the old house, and we must grow it afresh in the new abode. Unlike the evergreens and

fruit-trees, however, it is of no use to your successor. He may eat the apples where you have watched the bloom, but he must grow for himself the fruit whence is expressed the mysterious and subtle essence of home.

The indescribable something has grown and flourished at the Oldhams' little cottage, as the passion-flower has done which Violet planted beside the tiny porch. The creeper you see has already climbed to the upper windows, and is covered with a very glory of white blossoms.

Yonder you perceive is the patch of "her very own real potatoes" that Violet had expressed so romantic a desire to possess. They are an extravagance, I will grant you, for they will cost about three times as much money as they would if purchased of the greengrocer. But, after all, the extravagance is not a very great extravagance, and if everybody's hobby could be as cheaply satisfied we should not hear as much as we do of the lavish prodigality of the present age.

Besides "her very own real potatoes," Violet possesses now a goodly show of plants—enough to render her plot of ground noticeable for prettiness, even among the gardens of the Colony, where the inhabitants maintain a pleasant friendly rivalry in horticulture, and

are indefatigable in their efforts with a view to the prizes in the annual flower-show, at which Colonists only are allowed to compete.

Violet's garden owes much of its beauty to the frequent contributions of old Heginbotham, become a regular Saturday visitor at the cottage. Now he comes perspiring, but happy, with a huge pot of odorous Cytisus, his rosy face beaming over the fresh green with all the charms of complementary colour. Now he comes striding along with a tall standard rose, as if he were a giant armed with a newly uptorn tree for a club. He has a happy disregard of appearances, and a supreme unconsciousness that, when rude people cry out after him "all a-blowing, and a-growing," they are alluding to him and his burden.

He laughed at Violet's expostulations against such frequent gifts, and completely over-ruled her objections. "Hang it, Mrs. Oldham; don't deprive an old fool of his one innocent hobby. Don't deny me the pleasure of buying a few flowers—the money would only go in whisky otherwise. Now, greatly as I admit I admire the flavour of whisky, this fragrance"—and he sniffs at a bounteous bloom of *Gloire de Dijon*—"is, after all, more exquisite." So the *Gloire de Dijon* is planted in the garden, and Heg con-

tinues to embody drinks in a floral shape until Violet declares the garden won't hold any more plants, and so he is obliged to stop the supply.

But we have spent sufficient time in the garden—let us knock at the door. A strange face, eh? The door is opened by an elderly woman—not the small maid we remember at "The Grove." But the small maid is not discharged, nevertheless, for her voice is plainly audible singing in one of the upper rooms. What has the elderly female to do here? In answer to our inquiries she uses a form of expression that explains not only her appearance, but something else which last time we visited the Colony seemed such a puzzle to us.

"Mrs. Oldham is doing very nicely."

The mystery of the seeming doll's-clothes is a mystery no longer! The elderly female brings a bundle of it for us to examine—I can remember seeing Miss Heginbotham engaged on that cap frill—the frill at present surrounds a tiny face with a pair of wondering eyes in it, with a small button hole in it which we conjecture to be a mouth, judging from its relative position to the eyes aforesaid, and finally with a small protuberance in it, which the elderly female assures us, as solemnly as if she were on oath,

is "Mr. Oldham's nose." If it be, Mr. Oldham's nose is considerably altered since we last saw it; but it is as well not to say so. The arrival of Baby in the Colony invests that elderly female with an immense authority, and if we ventured to suggest that Mr. Oldham's nose has gone to the office of *The Daily Cockcrow*, whither it has been followed by its owner, she might order us out for immediate execution. And we should have to go! Wherefore, if you please, we will accept the doctrine that Lancelot's nose, although not a bird according to Sir Boyle Roche's ornithological definition, can be in two places at once.

It is astonishing to note with what dignity Baby invests all the womankind at the cottage. Mrs. Hassard, even, seems to have assumed new power, and her flabby mind for a time is improved in fibre. Miss Heginbotham is here, too, with her sweet smile and silver hair; and she looks more than ever like a beneficent fairy godmother, who has come to endow the little princess with all sorts of gifts and good qualities. Even the little maid is conscious of enlarged privileges, and, under pretence of soothing Baby to rest, sings idiotic lullabies at the top of her voice, in a key that would have made the Seven Sleepers turn uneasily in their slum-

bers. Until the arrival of Baby she would as soon have thought of singing in this way, as she would of letting off cannons in the back kitchen.

But if all of the womankind at the cottage arrogate to themselves extraordinary powers, and assume wider authority as feudatory principalities, they are scrupulous in doing homage to their liege lady and sovereign, Her Royal Highness's Baby! Even Baby's Mamma is held second in importance to Baby, and I am bound to add, submits to the partial deposal with pride and joy.

"My dear boy," says Heg, when Lancelot laughingly protests against the despotism of Baby, "from this time forth you must make up your mind to social annihilation—you're nobody and nothing—Baby is everybody and everything, so the sooner you accept your position the better."

Lancelot laughs yet more at this, and looking at his wife's pale face sees on it a look that tells him that in her heart, at any rate, his place is unchanged—nay, that he is even dearer than ever now. And he feels that as she sits there in all the sweet pride of a young mother, Violet is endowed with a new and wider title to his love, and if his laugh dies out, and something

very like the mist of unshed tears rises in his eyes, it is not because he is not happy, but because he is so full of happiness that only tears could express it.

Mrs. Hassard and Miss Heginbotham are godmothers, and Heginbotham is persuaded to be godfather, though he protests that he is a most unfit person. Baby is christened Letitia Violet —the former name being given her in honour of Miss Heginbotham. Lancelot, however, will have it that his wife has another motive in so christening the baby. He declares that her gardening mania has induced her to select a name that is familiarly shortened into "Lettice."

"You don't know any Christian name, for which the short is 'potato,' do you, Heg?" he asks. "I am sure my wife would be grateful for ever to you if you could suggest such a thing."

But though he jokes his wife about her garden, he takes as much pride in it as she does, and spends all his spare time in tending it. Heginbotham suggests to him that he should combine pleasure with business, and that instead of writing his leaders he should grow them in mustard and cress.

Lancelot has more spare time on his hands

for gardening than he could wish. Since *The Cockcrow* people made him resign his sub-editorship of the magazine, he has been unable to obtain any similar appointment, and though he is a contributor to several periodicals, the employment is but casual, and his articles are often kept a long time in hand by the different editors.

"Can't you catch a capitalist, my boy," Heg used to say, "and prevail on him to start a paper or a magazine for you? Somehow there don't seem to be so many capitalists about as there used to be. You couldn't walk twenty steps in Fleet-street without running up against one a few years since, but they seem to have died out. There are precious few capitalists going nowadays, and of those few several are capitalists of a novel and unpleasantly original style—capitalists without any capital, except impudence, and that won't pay printers' bills, eh?"

"Yet there are always lots of new ventures coming out!"

"And going in! They are started by the new school of capitalists, and the few that don't go in are supported by the paper-makers. Talk about the unexplained phenomena of nature! There's nothing more curious in creation than

paper-makers. Look at the scores of papers and periodicals that are entirely kept alive by paper-makers. If you owe your butcher a heavy bill, and tell him you've no money to buy with, he would not tell you that rather than not get rid of his beef he will give it. But it seems as if a paper-maker would rather give away his goods than otherwise—it's as if he were under a penalty to make and get rid of so much paper a year. And he not only gives his paper but his money even, his financial system being on a par with the labour of the Danaïdes. He keeps pouring his capital into a pail with a hole in the bottom, and yet he makes money!"

But though Heginbotham and Lancelot exerted themselves to try and discover some one willing to start a periodical they did not succeed, though the scheme for the publication devised by Lancelot was admitted to be an admirable one.

At last Lancelot applied to Shuffle, Brothers, and Lyher, a firm of great respectability. He saw Shuffle senior, who referred him to "our Mr. Lyher," and Mr. Lyher called Shuffle junior into their consultation. They gave Lancelot no very warm encouragement, but they continued to treat with him without giving a definite decision for about a week. Then all of a sudden he found it impossible to obtain an

interview with any of them, although he felt sure they were not out as they were reported to be. He told Heginbotham, and Heg, who knew the tactics and dodges of every kind connected with literature, declared that Shuffle, Brothers, and Lyher were going to swindle him in some way. He advised Lancelot to write and ask for a definite answer one way or the other by return of post. He received a reply the next morning, which stated that the firm could not see its way to carrying out the plan—that a similar plan had long since been devised by the firm, but had been abandoned as impracticable. Lancelot took the letter to *The Cockcrow* office to show it to Heginbotham, but the latter greeted him on entering the room with "I told you it was a swindle—look here!" and handed him the paper, pointing out a particular advertisement.

To Lancelot's surprise, there was the announcement of a new periodical on the plan he had drawn out. He was completely puzzled.

"What do you mean, Heg?"

"That that canting old humbug Shuffle has sucked your brains, and has stolen your idea!"

"But they have written to say they cannot see their way to doing it. And this isn't published by them."

"My dear boy, Shuffle and Lyher have not grown grey in their business to let you catch them picking your pocket. But the office where the new spec is to be published is theirs, for I remember two of their publications have been started there. Bless you, my innocent friend, they have lots of bolt-holes of the kind, and only publish their respectable things at the firm's recognized office — they can advertise their disreputable specs by pitching into them in their moral publications."

"What can I do?" asked Lancelot.

"Nothing. It's no use—you couldn't nail them, anyhow; so you must give them the notion—and a wide berth in future."

So Lancelot had to put up with his loss. It was a sore trial, for he had counted on the scheme as a little annuity. But it was gone, and it was no use to cry over spilt milk. He shook the dust off his feet against Shuffle, Brothers, and Lyher, and left them in undisputed possession of their prey, and, somewhat despairingly, set about trying to think of some other novel and original plan. Unfortunately, such ideas are not as common as blackberries, and he meditated and planned in vain.

Meanwhile, an old chum of Heg's having been engaged to edit a magazine, and being in

want of a novel to succeed the one that was running therein, was advised by Heginbotham to apply to Lancelot.

Lancelot was in immense glee at the notion, and set to work at once at his story. But he was doomed to be disappointed a second time. Just as he was about half a dozen chapters from the end, he got a note from the editor asking him to call upon him. He did so, and learnt that the editor had quarrelled with Messrs. Fagg, the proprietors, and was about to retire. He was extremely sorry, but he did not know what to do about Lancelot's novel—the Messrs. Fagg refused to be bound by his arrangement, but hinted that if Lancelot chose to submit the story to them, they would see about it. This Lancelot declined to do, for he would only have admitted by so doing that they had a right to decide—and that right they would have exercised by declining his story. So he stood by his right, said that their editor had commissioned him to write the story, and that he was prepared to submit it to him—but not to Messrs. Fagg. But it was useless, as Heginbotham pointed out, for his only remedy would have been against the editor, who was innocent in the matter, and with whom, moreover, as being a writer like himself, Lancelot had not thought of having an agreement in black and white.

However, as he had the novel ready by this time, he determined to try and find a market for it. He submitted it to several editors, but, as a rule, they had made arrangements some way ahead for their serials, and his novel hung on hand in consequence.

He had almost given up all hope of doing anything with his story, when he received a note requesting him to call upon the editor of *The Clarion*, a mildly moral magazine, belonging to a rather cracky country gentleman, who had started it with a view to the ventilation of a scheme of decimal coinage which he had invented.

Lancelot found the editor of *The Clarion* in much request. He had one visitor closeted with him, and two more waiting for interviews. At last, however, Lancelot's turn came, and he was ushered into the sanctum.

The editor was an Irishman, with more than his share of the volubility so often found in Irishmen. He was not in other respects a favourable example of his countrymen. Heginbotham used to declare he was the only unpleasant Irishman he had ever met, and vowed that though the fellow considered himself gifted with oratorical powers, the only real claim he had to their possession was that his thick-lipped, coarse mouth was very like that of

Demosthenes as it must have looked when it was full of pebbles!

The editor at first snubbed Lancelot, and showed a great many airs and graces. Lancelot's card had been somehow mislaid, and the other supposed him to be some aspirant to literature, whom it was necessary to impress with his importance and superiority. It was not until Lancelot by chance let drop a remark about an article he had written for the *Palladium*, that the editor saw he had made a mistake. He knew that he ought not to snub a writer on the *Palladium* for fear of reprisals, so he inquired who his visitor was, and on learning his name became as servile and flattering as he had before been haughty and domineering.

He made Lancelot an offer for his novel, but it was such a small one that Lancelot hesitated about accepting it. When the other went on to point out certain alterations he should like to have made in it to suit the class of readers who took in *The Clarion*, Lancelot flatly refused.

"But, my dear Mr. Oldham, one of your characters makes use of a profane oath!" expostulated the editor; "and our readers would not approve of such language in our pages—

not even if we merely put a dash. They are so particular. Then, too, I see one chapter is about an inn and people carousing—you couldn't alter the scene, and leave out the drinking part."

"I see the story would not suit you," said Lancelot, out of patience; "and your terms do not exactly suit me. I don't think it's of any use prolonging this interview."

The editor was full of regrets and apologies, and tried to talk Lancelot over, but he failed. Lancelot put his MS. in his pocket, and took his leave.

"I shall never get rid of it!" he said, when he got home; "put it away out of sight, my dear!"

Violet took the novel, and locked it up in a drawer.

"It *will* be of use, Lancelot, some of these days, when you have taken your position in literature."

"When will that be?" said Lancelot. "Never, I fear. I think I shall try writing for the stage next!"

CHAPTER IX.

"RUBBED OUT!"

AFTER a time the search for Major Verner, the defaulting hotel-manager, began to slacken, and people began to talk of making the best of a bad job. It was only throwing good money after bad to pay detectives when there wasn't the least trace to follow up. The hotel proprietor turned his attention to recouping himself for his loss by overcharging his customers, or by some kindred trick of trade. The bank-manager, in order to keep his place, had to make good the losses he had innocently allowed. Mrs. Randeggar did not think of her money, but she was furious at the slight her feelings had suffered. She ended by marrying a member of Congress, upon whom she wreaked the vengeance she would fain have made the inconstant Major feel. In time, therefore, the affair came to be almost forgotten.

But Major Verner—or rather Captain Hassard, for he dropped his Boston *alias* on

arriving in Canada—was not aware of the abandonment of the search for him, and continued in hiding for a considerable time.

Age, I suppose, had begun to tell upon his nerves, for he found that he could not settle down quietly as he had intended to do. He was in a perpetual tremor lest somebody from Boston should come upon him in his retreat.

Nor did he less dread the Lovely Leontine. He kept a strict watch upon her movements as recorded in the papers, and was devoured by a constant anxiety and terror lest she should take it into her head to extend her tour through Canada as well as the States. So great was his terror of capture that he kept himself prepared to bolt at a moment's notice, with all his valuables ready packed. He had carefully considered the various routes he might take to evade pursuit, and had determined at the first alarm to make for California.

The alarm came before long—though in reality it was but a false alarm.

It happened in this wise! Hiram T. Priddyboy, of New York, was a journalist, gifted with matchless impudence and an unlimited power of invective. He had, it appears, had occasion to attack Mr. Cornwallis Gyldee, of Boston, who was staying in New York, in order to

assist in getting the sanction of Congress to a bill in which he was interested. Hiram found ample employment for his ferocious pen in writing down Mr. Gyldee not merely an ass, but as everything else, two-footed or four-footed, winged or finned, in earth, air, or water, that was of a depreciatory character. Furthermore, while indulging his taste for invective, he exercised his impudence by making love to the wife of the man he was abusing. Gyldee, on learning this cumulative wrong, made solemn oath that he would dust the jacket of his vilifier and wronger. He did so, but selected a time for doing so when not only was Mr. Priddiboy inside the said jacket or coat, but there was also a loaded revolver in one of its pockets, which exploded in Mr. Priddiboy's hand while its muzzle was directed towards Mr. Gyldee's body, and its trigger was being pressed by Mr. Priddiboy's forefinger. Such was the account Hiram gave of what he smilingly described as "the accident," and, he added, that the injury inflicted on Mr. Gyldee was of so severe a nature that it was thought advisable to bury him.

There were, however, people so obtuse in intellect that they failed to perceive the accidental nature of Mr. Gyldee's death, and Hiram

had the satisfaction of seeing that writers, who had acquired the rudiments of the art of invective, while sitting at his feet, could use that art very effectively against their teacher. He was described as "the assassin," and the accident was spoken of as "a murder." This, Hiram declared, was just a little rough on him; to be sure he had tried to destroy not only Gyldee's private character, but his domestic peace; but then he could hardly be expected to take a cowhiding from his victim without a show of resistance. Yet somehow nobody expressed any sympathy for the misinterpreted Hiram, and he found it necessary to create a scarcity of the article Priddiboy, the more especially as he learnt that Gyldee's younger brother, who was owner of a large plantation down South, was sworn to revenge his brother's death.

The younger Gyldee was a determined man, with a nature not unlike that of the fierce hounds with which in the days of slavery they had hunted down runaway slaves in his neighbourhood. He put himself on Hiram's trail, with a sullen but unwearying intent to capture him at last, if he hunted him to the end of the world. He found that Hiram had made tracks for Canada, and he started thither in pursuit,

outstripping in his eagerness the detectives he was employing.

Captain Hassard had seen young Gyldee at the hotel in Boston, but he did not recall his name; so that it gave him an unpleasant start when he met him in the retired Canadian township, where he fondly supposed the Bostonians would never think of looking for him. When the next day he recognized the detectives, he jumped at the conclusion that they were on his trail, so he got his traps together and bolted. There was no need for his doing so, for Gyldee, even had he remembered the Major, was too absorbed in his own scheme of revenge to go out of his way merely to trap a defaulting hotel-manager. He tracked Hiram for nearly three months, ran into him at Hayti, and shot him, receiving at the same time his death wound from the other's bowie-knife.

The Captain adhered to his original proposal, and made straight for California—a long and not altogether safe journey in those days, ere the Pacific Railway had connected the East and the West.

Meanwhile, the Lovely Leontine, having abandoned her search for the runaway, had made a tremendous hit. She and White Lily had been a success of some magnitude on their

first appearance, but now, when they returned, crowned with the applause of that "busted-up old Europe," they created quite a *furore*. She made so much money that she determined to start a troupe and make a tour through the States, starring.

Esther at first seemed inclined to discourage this notion, but she soon found that the excitement and bustle were as necessary to her mother as the breath of her nostrils. For the Lovely Leontine was getting quite an old woman, and she was kept alive by the stimulant of acting and applause. A day or two of what would have been rest to others, would prostrate her almost. "Don't leave me alone—don't let me be idle!" she used to say; and indeed she was like the well-known old cab-horse—no slight to White Lily is here intended—who was all right as long as you kept him going, but tumbled down a mere heap of cat's-meat when you pulled up.

Esther, therefore, disguised her own dislike for the nomad style of life which her mother so delighted in, and affected to be pleased at the notion of seeing so much of the country as she would while they were travelling with the troupe.

The affection between mother and daughter

was very strong. It seemed as if they had resolved to make up for lost time by the warmth of their attachment. They were drawn together by sympathy too, for each had known the direst form of disappointment a woman can suffer.

The Lovely Leontine made all her arrangements for her trip. She engaged an agent, who had gone over the ground before, and in accordance with his advice determined to go to San Francisco by sea, and return overland, if the Indians were not out on the war-path. For although White Lily was equal on the stage to any number of foes, and could fire a pistol with ease, he was hardly to be relied upon as a defence against five hundred or so of whooping redskins. Of course, under any circumstances, it would be necessary to have an armed escort, for there were other savages about the Plains beside the red-skinned ones, who would be likely to undergo a painful amount of temptation at the sight of the Lovely Leontine and her treasures.

There is no necessity to give a full description of the trip, and the continuous success which followed the troupe everywhere. Those who desire to learn the details can find them, no doubt, at the British Museum; for were

they not written in the columns of *Sock and Buskin?* Suffice it for our purpose, that after reaping a rare harvest at San Francisco and elsewhere, the Lovely Leontine at length set her face homewards.

The agent had made inquiries diligently as to the state of the Plains, and was assured that the Indians were as peaceable as they were ever likely to be. So he got together a sufficient escort and armed them, and in due course set out. It was necessary not to push along too fast for fear of fatiguing White Lily, who was an animal of mature years now, and not capable of long and rapid journeys. It would never have done to drive the poor brute to death, for where would have been the success of "Fire and Water" without the principal performer?

Leontine and Esther were not displeased at the easy pace they travelled at, and found ample employment in admiring the strange scenery through which they were travelling. Every here and there they came to some mining or gold-digging station, where they would stop for a few nights, and give their performances as they best could, taking payment in gold dust, or even articles of food in some cases.

As they get further into the interior they

learn that the accounts they have received of the Indians are a trifle rose-coloured. A party of the Watonah tribe had been out a few weeks before, and had fallen upon, robbed and murdered, a party of miners going to a new spot to prospect for gold.

This was not cheering intelligence, and anxious watch was kept for Indian "sign." One of the escort was an old hand, and had been engaged in fighting the Indians nearly all his life, so he was appointed commander-in-chief in case of an attack.

They were following the mail track at this portion of their route, so that they could learn the latest intelligence of the savages at the various stations which had extra guards posted. As nothing had been seen of the redskins for the last week or so, it was hoped they had gone off to attack some rival tribe. At any rate, the mails had not been molested lately.

At last, one day, soon after they have passed a small station called Long Creek, there is an alarm. A figure, evidently that of an Indian, has been observed skulking in the sage bushes, a little way off the track. A halt is called for consultation, and the commander-in-chief undertakes to go out and reconnoitre.

He is soon lost to sight in the bush, and

then the Lovely Leontine begins to feel alarmed, and regrets that she has allowed her only experienced warrior to be exposed to such risk.

Some time elapses, and they are all in a fever of suspense, when suddenly the man is seen returning—but not alone. As they come nearer it is evident that his companion is an Indian woman.

He reports at once that there is no fear. The woman is a fugitive from her tribe, which has gone northward on the war trail, after having committed the ravages of which they had recently heard at the various stations. He added that she had told him she wanted to come to them for assistance which she was in need of, but had not the courage to come forward for fear they should shoot her.

The Lovely Leontine looks at the woman with curiosity. She had seen a good many stage Indians, but this is the first time she has set eyes on a genuine squaw.

She was a short and thickly-built woman, and showed the traces of hard work and exposure to the weather. Her clothes were ragged and travel-stained, and her long black hair was matted and unkempt. Yet, in spite of all this, there was something of grace and dignity about her.

They asked her what she required, and she replied "Brandy." The request was calculated to dispel any romantic impression created by her appearance. Esther turned away in disgust at such a disillusion, but her more practical mother poured some brandy from her flask into a cup and handed it to the Indian. The other made signs that she wanted it in the flask, not in the cup for her own drinking.

"Ninnishowa not want fire-water for herself. Paleface yonder want fire-water—cry for it night and day!"

"Oh, that's the game," said the commander-in-chief. "She's took up with some o' the low whites—a drunken miner or sich—she wants the liquor for him."

The Indian woman did not understand all he said, but she was evidently acquainted with the word "drunken," for she turned to him at once and shook her head.

"No drunk! so!"—with that, she made a rapid circular motion about the crown of her head with one forefinger.

"Good God," exclaimed the man, "it's some poor devil who's been scalped, and isn't dead yet! Where is he?" he added, turning to the woman.

She pointed to a hillock some distance off.

"Ninnishowa hide him in hole there. Keep him—get well!"

"Not much chance of that," said the man; "a chap don't often recover with the best o' doctorin', let alone such poor messes of herbs as you're like to be dressin' his scalp with, ye poor ignorant devil!"

Then he turned round to the Lovely Leontine and explained that the squaw was nursing some white man who had been scalped by her tribe. The Leontine at once wished to go and see if anything could be done for him.

"The kindest thing one could do for him would be to put a bullet through his head, and end his sufferin's, for they're downright awful; and when it comes to dressin' the place, I've seen chaps beg you to shoot 'em out of hand rather than put 'em to such pain. You can't do no good, and it's a mortal gashly sight."

But the Lovely Leontine insisted on going, and, guided by the swift-footed squaw, they made their way to the hillock, in the side of which a small cave had been dug. As they drew nearer they could hear a low continuous moaning, broken now and then by a shrill cry, or a few incoherent words.

As they approached the narrow mouth of the

cave, the sufferer within began to cry piteously for "brandy—brandy!"

There was something in the voice that seemed familiar to Leontine — and the blood went back to her heart at one great bound, and left her pale as the dead. She pushed the man aside as he was bending down to enter the cave, and flung herself on her knees beside——Captain Hassard!

Yes, gallant Jack Hassard had come to this at last—dying by the scalping-knife of a nameless savage!

He did not recognize her, but kept crying piteously for brandy. The man handed him his flask, and the Captain raised it to his lips, and drank greedily.

"He can't last, mum," he added, as he saw Leontine about to take the flask away; "better let him get 'tossicated; it'll ease him off."

The squaw, who had stood aloof till now, came forward. At the sight of her, terror seized the Captain, and he shrieked to them to keep her off—that she dressed his wound, and put him to the torture of the damned. As he spoke his eye caught the pistol in the belt of the man leaning over him. With a hasty hand he snatched it, placed it to his temple, and fired.

The Lovely Leontine fainted, and it was some

time ere she could be brought to her senses. The man attributed it to the shock of witnessing a suicide, and she said not a word to any one save Esther, that she knew the unfortunate man.

They dug a rude grave under the sage bushes, and buried the Captain, with nothing to mark the spot save a rude wooden cross.

How he came there, and with such a companion, they could not tell. The chief of the escort surmised either that he had inveigled the woman away, and had been discovered and killed by her tribe, or that he had been one of a party attacked by the redskins, and that he had contrived to win the squaw's pity. Jack Hassard had always been successful with the ladies!

As the evening shades closed in, and they looked back to the spot where they had buried the unhappy wretch, they saw the solitary figure of the Indian woman standing sentinel over the grave.

CHAPTER X.

EXIT CHANTICLEER!

It wasn't as if it had not been prophesied over and over again any number of years by any number of persons in and about the neighbourhood of Little Greyfriars-street. Nay, more!—in that very street itself there had been a whisper of it from the dawn of creation—or at least from as near that early date as was compatible with the existence of Little Greyfriars-street—a period about which the only thing one could predicate with certainty was that it was anterior to the suppression of monasteries by how many centuries nearer to creation outrunneth the memory of man. But, at any rate, in Little Greyfriars-street, from the earliest recollection of the oldest inhabitant, there had existed a tradition similar to that which was believed by the simple settlers at the foot of the Caatskill Mountains about Hendrik Hudson, or that which the unlettered peasants

of the Hartz tell of the slumbering Frederic Barbarossa—or, to come more nearly home, the legend, which is accepted by the dwellers about the Land's End and Mount's Bay, that Arthur is to reappear and ascend the throne—and, by the way, the Poet Laureate, if he shares this faith, has very artfully ingratiated himself with the returnable sovereign, and will probably be retained in his honourable appointment on the strength of "The Idylls," should the *Flos Regum* happen to come into bloom again in his time.

As the traditions I have mentioned told of the appearance, at some time or other, of the mysterious personages to whom they relate, so the famous tradition of Little Greyfriars-street pointed to an expected appearance—the appearance of something that was to work marvels, and to assume sovereign sway in the classic region of Greyfriars!

Why, bless you, Puffin Brothers, the great advertising agents, had all along been looking forward to it as an enlarged sphere for work!

Michael O'Flannigan, the Champion Bill-poster, had dreamed for years of displaying the six-sheet bills that were to announce it!

The proprietor of the *Weekly Story-Teller*

(without which no gentleman's kitchen is complete) would long ago have done it—so he assures you in confidence—if he could but have commanded the capital! Scudderby, himself a mystery, always hanging about the frontiers of journalism and literature, and making a living by them no one knows how, had foretold this thing in the first hours of his connection with Greyfriars!

Bletherym Skaite, known in the world of Little Greyfriars as "Death Damp," because as soon as any periodical, after long struggles for existence, became so reduced that Skaite was engaged upon it, its prompt decease was certain; he was one of the last and most fatal symptoms of mortality—Bletherym Skaite, I say, had hinted at the probability of this thing in the columns of a journal since—it is needless to say—defunct!

You would have thought Printers' Devilry had been always too much engaged in pitch-in-the-hole to give much attention to the matter; but even the diabolic mind must have been impressed with some inkling of the future, for it seemed to say, "Ah, always thought it would be done!"

To sum up the whole affair, if you were to believe what they said, there was not a single

person in all Little Greyfriars-street who had not foreseen this long ago! Generally speaking, they had even mentioned it to somebody else (who either was dead, or absent, or didn't remember it) or they had put it in black and white in journals long since extinct, and not traceable in the British Museum!

Did I say everybody in Little Greyfriars-street had foreseen this? Well, I ought to have qualified the statement. In one spot in that region there would seem to have been no dim forebodings—by one set of people its appearance had never been anticipated—and it was just the spot, and they were just the people to which and to whom the appearance was fraught with the greatest importance.

The place was the office of *The Daily Cockcrow;* the people were the proprietors of that journal.

This was strange! Another curious thing was, that though all the people I have named had, according to their own accounts, heralded its advent, when it *did* come it took them very much by surprise, and they had just time to recover their breath before they could utter the shibboleth of the self-appointed prophets — "I told you so!"

If there had been an earthquake in Little

Greyfriars-street there could hardly have been more commotion, although, apart from the predictions of the prophets aforesaid, there had really been of late premonitory rumbles and tremors. I suppose they were mistaken for the noise of the 'buses in Fleet-street, or the fall of brickwork and masonry, or some of the other clamours, which for so many years marked what used to be ironically styled, in those times, the "progress" of the Holborn Viaduct works.

But stop! I see a gentle reader in the agonies of impatience.

"May I ask, sir, what it was that was anticipated, and prophesied, and predicted, and prognosticated, and foretold, and portended, and prefigured, and heralded, and foreboded in this way?"

You may, sir!

"Then what is it?"

Why, sir—though I protest against being held responsible for the results that may arise from the sudden revelation of the tremendous mystery, which I was endeavouring gently to break for you—but human nature is as imprudent as Semele, and will insist upon the Jupiter, the whole Jupiter, and nothing but the Jupiter, revealed in unmitigated splendour——

"The mystery, sir!"

Give me time, gentlemen and ladies! I was coming to it. The Jupiter whom you insist on seeing was, in short—*Jupiter Minimus*. When the learned Lempriere could not quite reconcile the various stories told of any classic divinity, he evaded the difficulty by saying, "There appear to have been two So-and-sos, one born, &c., the other born, &c." When I hint at the existence of more than one Jupiter in the mythology of Little Greyfriars-street—or rather of the republic of Journaldom, bounded on the East by Printing House-square, on the North by No. 103, Shoe-lane, on the South by No. 20, Bouverie-street, and on the West by No. 123, Little Greyfriars-street—it is not because there is any confusion about those deities. Every one knows who *Jupiter Major* is—and every one, or every reader of the *Saturday*, which is much the same thing, knows who *Jupiter Minor* is, and every one, or every reader of this veracious history, which is perhaps not much the same thing, will know henceforth that *Jupiter Minimus* is *The Daybreak*, the halfpenny morning paper, of which the evening edition is entitled *The Gloaming*.

There! The secret is out! It was a halfpenny morning paper, which everybody had

vowed he had prophesied ages ago, but which, somehow, nobody had started, and which, somehow, when it was started, took all by surprise, including, first in degree, the proprietors, editors, and staff generally of *The Daily Cockcrow*.

The Daybreak was the result of a large investment, not only of capital, but of brains. It was turned out in admirable style. It was practical, not pretty. It did not fall into the error of toned paper—a capital thing for woodcuts, just for the very reason that it is not the best thing for the mere type of a paper that is to be read in 'bus and on rail—namely, because it softens down the contrast of simple, staring black and white. It was not faintly printed with worn type, on a sort of superior curl-paper, and it avoided the possibly harmless temptation of "old-faced" letter. Finally, it did not profess to give the public a large superficies of paper so much as an extensive amount of news; in other words, it contained, contrary to the usual rule, more news than advertisements, which effected a saving not only of the paper of the proprietors, but of the patience of the public.

But I see another gentle reader impatient.

"But, sir, advertisements are the really paying parts of all papers."

As at present constituted, sir, I grant you.

But you might have urged the same argument but a short time since in favour of threepence as the only price for a paper. But are you not aware that this great paying portion of the newspaper scheme may become a positive loss in proportion to the extra circulation of a paper? I am not a financier or a mathematician, but I can see that if I—the proprietor of *The Daily Cockcrow*, say—undertake to insert an advertisement for a certain sum in my paper—take five pounds—I am only in the position of a printer who undertakes to print an edition of that advertisement of uncertain magnitude. Up to the time when the actual cost of paper, composition, machining, &c., reaches the sum of four pounds, nineteen shillings, and elevenpence three farthings, I get a profit, diminishing finally to one farthing. The moment the cost is increased by one farthing, profit ceases, and a step beyond that loss begins. Of course, in a newspaper, this is to some extent counterbalanced by the fact that, after the first outlay on many things, increased circulation means increased profits, but even then it is possible to conceive a period when the printing, for instance, of an extra supplement like that of *The Times* is a dead loss.

Now, the proprietors of *The Daybreak* were

clear on two points—firstly, that a multitude of advertisements is a weariness of soul to the public, compelling them to struggle with a larger amount of paper than is pleasant, and rewarding their struggles with an insufficient amount of readable matter; and secondly, that a multitude of advertisements means a reduction of charges for advertising, to say nothing of a reduced power to reject questionable announcements. So they kept their space for advertising to the minimum—their charge to the maximum; and they made up their minds to do without advertisements until they had established their position, for they knew there would be no need to tout for them then—they would come of themselves. They gave short leaders only—concentrated essence of opinion, knowing very well that your average Briton does not know what he thinks about things, politically or otherwise, till he has learned it from his paper. They gave their news briefly, though fully, and they were only expansive in their fancy-reporting of matters of universal interest—they would spend more, for example, on the opening of the Holborn Viaduct than on the opening of the Suez Canal. And if brevity was the soul of their morning edition, it was the body and soul of their evening issue,

which had no leaders—or only one—because the proprietors—or rather the brains that gave direction to their capital — knew that the average Briton going home from business in the evening has only just sufficient energy to skim the cream of the news, and being autocrat of the home circle does not require to be primed with opinions so much as he does at his breakfast.

Such was the scheme of *The Daybreak*. People pooh-poohed it at first, and the jesters of Little Greyfriars asked who was to be Registrar for the Day when it did break, and how much in the pound was it likely to pay. Or they suggested "sunset" would come soon after it, and said the shortest day might consequently be looked-for speedily. But *The Daybreak* was not put out. It steadily rose in the public estimation. The street boys, who had been shy of it at first, found that selling as they did three *Daybreaks* to one *Cockcrow*, the former might be regarded as the better investment. Then came the advertisers who had coquetted with the new venture, and like all coquettes repented when it was too late. Not for Golconda would the proprietors enlarge the space of two columns and a half they had originally set aside for "advts." and as for reducing

their terms they were more likely to estimate their advertising space as if it were the last of the Sibylline leaves. When it was filled, the door was closed as irrevocably as if it were the gate of Eden, and the disconsolate advertisers were so many Peris anxious to make public the virtues of "The Patriot's Blood," or the "Sigh of Self-sacrificing Love!"

Then there was tribulation at the office of *The Daily Cockcrow*, for they knew well there that advertisements are coy as Success, that like true friends they are the last to be won, but once won are the last to leave. Besides, the new policy of *The Daybreak* promulgated the heresy in advertising, that it was not much use to pay for insertion in a mob, that in order to be seen it was better to give seven and sixpence for a stall, than sixpence for a back place in the gallery of journalism.

And now came unpleasant times for the staff of *The Cockcrow!*

Hitherto, for many a year since the first bustle and labour of putting out of port, it had been all plain sailing with the good ship, *Cockcrow*. Halcyon days had brooded over the unruffled deep of popularity, and the soft gales of prosperity had gently filled her sails, as she glided over the glassy plain. The owners were

in the grand cabin counting out their money, like the monarch of nursery rhyme. The purser was in the wardroom eating bread and honey, or spreading it in the form of cheques for the crew! The captain was on the quarter-deck, looking for all the world as if he had been that amiable skipper, "Captain Reece, commander of *The Mantelpiece.*" The crew were in the fo'k'sle, hanging out their clothes —though I don't think a public dab-wash is permitted on board ship—when down came a privateering blackbird, and lo! the nose of the good ship *Cockcrow*, and the noses of all on board her, were out of joint.

"Sail, ho!" said the man in the top; and presently "considerably increased sale, ho!" I suppose.

Then there was a change indeed in *The Cock-crow*, as the saucy little *Daybreak* began to show her a clean pair of heels. The owners began to find it necessary to heave their treasure overboard pretty liberally, abusing the purser for not screwing down the pay of the sailors. The captain began to storm and swear at the crew, and to order them about in rare style. And the crew did not like it!

In other words, the proprietors of *The Cock-crow* had to put more money into it, and the

manager had to make up for the extraordinary expenditure by cutting down the ordinary expenditure. The editor, whose policy the proprietors now began to criticise and find fault with, revenged himself by pitching into the staff, until there was a general feeling of dissatisfaction throughout the office. That was, unluckily, just the last thing likely to benefit the paper, or improve it. So the proprietors at length—to return to my nautical metaphor—felt compelled to take the ship into the nearest port, pay off the crew, and negotiate for her sale.

Lancelot Oldham, with the rest of the staff, received a month's notice. *The Cockcrow* was to be merged in the *Daily Reveillé*, but that was merely the euphemism by which newspapers nowadays, like the heathen of old, conceal the unpleasant notion of extinction. When a Roman died he was said *abire ad plures*—to join the majority. When a journal expires it is "incorporated with" some other serial! But unfortunately the incorporation of *The Cockcrow* with the *Reveillé* did not necessarily imply the addition of the staff of the former to that of the latter, which was fully adequate to carry on the two single newspapers rolled into one, without any additional assistance.

When Lancelot reached home after receiving his notice, he looked so anxious and ill that Violet was horrified, and begged to know what had happened.

"You must know it sooner or later, my poor wife—it is nothing less than ruin. *The Cock-crow* is to stop in a month!" and Lancelot sank into a chair as if he had been physically struck down!

"Never mind, dear!" said the little woman, concealing her own consternation, in order to cheer her husband. "There are plenty of other papers that will be only too glad to have you!"

"Not now—there might have been a year or so ago. Now the market is overstocked."

"Well, you can take a country newspaper, like that Irish friend of Mr. Heginbotham's, who used to live here in the Colony."

But Lancelot only shook his head.

"At any rate, there is a month to look about us in," said Violet, "and we can try and discover some way out of the difficulty. And I can give music lessons again."

Lancelot ground his teeth at the notion. Here had he been fighting all this while to raise his wife above the necessity for drudgery, and, behold, he had been struggling in vain. He

could have cried with vexation, and if he had, I, for one, could not find it in my heart to smile at the weakness of a man whose nerves were so continuously overwrought. There, is indeed, no spectacle so sad to my thinking as the industrious man, who is striving earnestly at work that drains brain or muscle, and who finds his labour in vain. The man who loses money in his business may, by a lucky speculation, retrieve his fortunes, but the man who expends either his physical force or his mental powers has no chance of recuperating by a sudden stroke. He is living on a capital that is daily becoming less and less available. Nay, too often when the success arrives it comes too late, and the exhausted limbs, or the weary brain can no longer answer the call.

In his trouble Lancelot found no better comforter than old Heg. Heg had had a considerable experience in the rise and decline of journals and periodicals, and having somehow always fallen on his feet, had a strong belief that a newspaper-writer and a cat possess in common the gift of so coming to the ground.

"Cheer up, Oldham!" said he, "and let's survey the surrounding country. You've made your mark, and rely upon it you won't be long out of harness." So between Heg and his

wife, Lancelot was talked into a less desponding state of mind, and heard without any excessive emotion the last cock-a-doodle-doo of that ill-fated journal *The Daily Cockcrow*.

CHAPTER XI.

A HOMERIC STRUGGLE.

Mr. Stimpson, Old Scardrake's lawyer, saw that if his client's neck was to be saved from the halter, there was no time to be lost!

But Scardrake gave way altogether now, and fell into a half imbecile state, that incapacitated him for any attempt to further his lawyer's efforts. All he wished was to see his daughter, he said, and it was the only sensible remark that Stimpson could extort from him. However, Stimpson was not to be disheartened, and set about his work at once.

First of all he went to the leading men of Spincaster, and besought them to sign a memorial, praying for a pardon for Scardrake. He had no easy or pleasant task. Many of them said the fellow had been duly tried and found guilty, and they had no doubt with justice. Others, while admitting that they had some doubts about the propriety of the verdict, had

none at all about the propriety of Scardrake being hanged. Then he appealed to them for the credit of Spincaster to assist in freeing it from the stain of such a sentence. Partly by argument, partly by importunity, he procured a fair show of signatures, and forwarded the memorial to the Home Secretary.

The Cockcrow, which was not yet defunct, as described at the end of the last chapter, was yet in a state of decline, and in hopes of creating a sensation, took up the cudgels strongly in Scardrake's favour and demanded his pardon.

The Home Secretary was cast in the mould in which all Home Secretaries would seem to be originally cast, being subsequently finished off by hand in order to distinguish them. He had not had much experience in office, and frequently got into scrapes, and did not come out of them gracefully. He had a tremendous difference with the cab interest, in consequence of his insisting that all licensed public vehicles should carry lamps. The cabmen had a mass-meeting, and made a bonfire of lamps in the quadrangle at Somerset House, after lodging a petition at the Home Office for the withdrawal of the lamp edict. The Home Secretary, urged to it, perhaps, by other ministers,

refused the prayer, and the cabmen accordingly called another mass-meeting, with some threats about making a bonfire of Somerset House itself this time. Thereupon the Home Secretary declared he would put a dozen policemen in the entry and forbid the meeting. A few M.P.'s and busybodies, who had mixed themselves up in the dispute, waited upon the Home Secretary, and reminded him that, on the occasion of the lamp bonfire, one cabman had had his coat torn, and the policeman, in trying to put out some of the lamps, had scratched his hand. They implored the Home Secretary to avoid any further bloodshed, and so worked upon the feelings of that amiable gentleman that the reporters said he was "much affected" by the remarks of the deputation, and the deputation had the good taste to go away and blazon the fact that he had wept, because he sniffed three times, and was observed to hold his pocket-handkerchief to his nose. The twelve policemen were counter-ordered, and the cabs are lampless to this day.

The next thing he did was to interfere with a procession of working men who expressed their intention of marching "in their thousands" from Tower Hill to Hyde Park as a monster demonstration in favour of the legalizing of

Trades Societies. The Home Secretary would not permit this, unless every person in the procession wore a small tin flag inscribed with the letters of the alphabet in his hat. He defended the step by describing this as a means of getting the rudiments of education into the heads of the working men, and that consequently an improved class of working men would spring up—with much more nonsense to the same effect!

With regard to the reprieves of prisoners condemned to death for murder, his course had been a little eccentric, and Mr. Stimpson found it difficult to deduce from his practice the probable course he would adopt with regard to Scardrake. In one case, which, if ever there was an unprovoked and unjustifiable murder, was that particular crime, the Home Secretary remitted the punishment, the only excuse for his so doing being that the murder had been done in an excess of ungovernable fury. In another case, where a man had slain another for the worst wrong a man can inflict on his fellow, the Home Secretary declined to move because the marriage certificate of the woman, who was the cause of the deed, was not forthcoming. In yet another case he had commuted capital punishment into penal servitude for life, on the

ground that the evidence, in the opinion of the judge who had tried the prisoner, did not conclusively prove him guilty: which most people would have considered a reason for granting him a pardon, rather than a change of punishment. But then most people are not Home Secretaries.

Sir Minto Farquhar was consulted about the Scardrake memorial, and gave it as his opinion that the verdict had been against the evidence, and his summing-up. The law officers of the Crown were also called in; but having belonged to the opposite side of the House in his Parliamentary days, had got into a habit of differing from Sir Minto possibly: at any rate, the Home Secretary followed the precedent he had established in the last case I named just now to explain his practice. Scardrake was not to be hanged, but to be imprisoned for life.

Mr. Stimpson was dissatisfied with this result, and got an independent M.P. to ask a question about it in the House. Accordingly on an early "Members' Night," Mr. Clarkson Entwistle, M.P. for Stoke Pogis, rose and inquired of the Home Secretary if it was true that a certain prisoner, Elias Scardrake, left for execution for murder at the late Spincaster Assizes, had had his sentence commuted to

penal servitude for life—and if so, why? "If he be guilty," said the honourable member, "he should be duly executed, in accordance with the statute, for I venture to assert that no authority can be found for a minister to overrule the Statute Book and substitute a punishment of his own selection. Such a course would be most unconstitutional, and fraught with danger to the due administration of justice. But if, on the other hand, the prisoner in question is not guilty, I ask you, sir, if it is in accordance with the spirit of English justice that he shall be punished for the blunders of a jury, or the shortcomings of a counsel, instead of being pardoned—and really to be pardoned for a crime one has not committed is not a great reparation for a wrongful sentence." The Home Secretary, not finding it convenient to be in his place on this occasion, the Solicitor-General was deputed to give the required explanation. That eminent legal luminary could bewilder the House as easily as he could a jury, and he so confused the M.P. for Stoke Pogis, that that gentleman could not remember the case he had so very plainly stated, and allowed himself to be artfully led off on another scent. For the Solicitor-General shrewdly took hold of

Mr. Entwistle's remarks about "the blunders of a jury, and the shortcomings of a counsel," and launched out into a panegyric on the intelligence and virtue of a British jury, winding up by alluding to Mr. Mirehouse, Q.C., as one "whose eloquence and whose learning, whose zeal and whose integrity would fittingly adorn this House, of which ere long, I trust, sir, we may have the pleasure of hailing him as a member." He could not, he said, allow the sneer of the honourable member for Stoke Pogis, at a gentleman so distinguished, to pass unnoticed, or permit the charge of shortcoming to go uncontradicted.

Mr. Stimpson, admitted to the Speaker's Gallery to watch the proceedings, saw with horror that the M.P. for Stoke Pogis did not observe the trap which he, as a lawyer, could see plainly enough. A few words from Mr. Entwistle, who declared nothing was further from his mind than the idea of reflecting on a lawyer so distinguished as Mr. Mirehouse, wound up the inquiry, and, in the words of the Parliamentary reporter, "the matter then dropped."

The Cockcrow, taking the cue from Mr. Entwistle, came out strong on the commutation of sentence. Mr. Stayninge, to whom

was entrusted the task of flaying the Home Secretary on this occasion, took off his lavender kids and seized his pen to perform the operation with intense gusto. He did not write with the less acrimony and pungency, because he knew that his opportunities for crowing were daily diminishing. I have no doubt that if the Home Secretary read the article—and I think it probable he did—he must have wished that Scardrake had been executed before he ever heard of him, and perhaps repented that he was unable to change his mind and send word to the Governor of Spincaster Gaol to hang the old wretch out of hand.

But the Governor of Spincaster Gaol had long ere this sent a polite note to the public executioner to intimate that his services would not be required on this occasion, and to beg his acceptance of the accompanying cheque for five pounds as a trifling *solatium* for his disappointment.

Now here was a pretty to-do about old Scardrake! Here were worry, and censure, and misrepresentation, and disappointment entailed upon all sorts and conditions of men, from the hangman to the Home Secretary; and all about a man who seemed to be the least

concerned person of them all, though it was a question of life or death to him. It was like the struggle in the Iliad about the corpse of Sarpedon or Patroclus. Mighty warriors or nameless privates were giving and taking plaguy knocks over his prostrate body:—"Him then bestrode the sceptre-bearing Homesecretarios, giver and withholder of mercy, bearing before him his hollow shield, and having in his right hand his doughty sword; the which perceiving, to him advanced the bold Entwistle, dear to the plains of Stoke Pogis, swift in council and eager. Alas! hapless youth! for lo! Keuseios, the lawgiver, beloved of Minerva, springs upon him, shaking aloft his mighty spear, whose long-shadowed haft was hewn in the grove of the Middle Temple. Full on the helm of Entwistle descends the resounding spear-head, and the hero sinks back, while dim visions of the dear Stoke Pogian vales swim before his darkening eyes. But this beheld the crafty Staynynx, the skilled archer, cock-crested, and armed with bow and well-feathered arrows, and, sinking on his knee, he fitted a keen shaft, pointed with the hard steel of the Gillottian mines, to the shrill string, and discharged it hissing against the triumphant Homesecretarios. Deep in the left side,

piercing to the gall bladder, the relentless arrow smote him, unprotected, and he groaned aloud, and called upon Themis, thus addressing her, 'Oh, Goddess of Justice, worshipped in the Halls of Homophis, in what have my sacrifices displeased thee, that thou wilt not protect me?' Meanwhile, Jakketchos, the chorægus, the weaver of nooses, hovering around the borders of the strife, bewailed his lot that he might not make spoil of the slain." And so on—and so on, one might describe the struggle in Homeric strain. And all the time Scardrake is as deaf and blind as the corpse of Patroclus to the battle that is raging around him!

It was not Mr. Stimpson's fault. He had first of all broken the news of the commutation of the sentence very carefully. The respite from death seemed to fall unheeded on Scardrake's ear! He endeavoured to rouse him by holding out hopes of a full restoration to freedom. The expectation did not hasten Scardrake's pulse a single beat! He seemed lost to all external matters save one. He still asked to see his daughter. But he could not tell them where to find her, and they had no clue to her whereabouts.

It chanced, however, that Mr. Stimpson, being in London, called at *The Cockcrow* office to thank the editor for advocating Scardrake's

case. The editor received him graciously, as became an abdicating potentate, and then transferred him to Oldham, who was to take down any particulars Stimpson gave him, and to see if they could be made available for the paper in any way.

When Lancelot heard how the old man craved for the sight of his daughter, his pity was touched, and he told Stimpson that he knew where she was, and would communicate with her. He also told Stimpson his name, and asked him to tell Scardrake who he was, and that he would write to his daughter.

Stimpson went back elated, and informed the old man of his interview with Lancelot, and of the latter's promise to write to Esther. But even that news failed to rouse Scardrake from his lethargy. It seemed to be increasing, and the lawyer thought it advisable to have a medical opinion. The doctor said that Scardrake's mind had given way, and that with regard to his daughter her coming might restore him to his senses, or it might deprive him of them entirely—there was no knowing how the shock would act.

Lancelot wrote to the Lovely Leontine, addressing her at a place where, according to the American papers, she would most probably be

when the mail reached the States. He told her of Scardrake's trial and its result, and of his desire to see Esther.

Then there was nothing to be done but to wait.

CHAPTER XII.

LANCELOT LOOKS EASTWARD.

It was getting late in the summer by t
The glory of Violet's little garden wa
wane, and the green woodlands at
Colony were assuming a sombreness p
of autumn's russets and browns. T
seemed wearied with blooming, and th
tudinous stars upon the passion-flower a
to faint and fall. Earth had basked
warm sunlight until she grew athirst
repose and the rain of autumn. She
to gather her children, the flowers
plants to her bosom again to sleep a
that they might arise with her—the
giant refreshed, in the sweet days of
Let the grumblers say what they wi
our changeable climate, there is infi
wonderful beauty in its varying sea
would not exchange the wax and
nature in our English land for all th

splendour of tropical forests, with their unfading luxuriance. The persistence of such loveliness must become as tedious as "the monotony of immortality," whereof the deities in Mr. Disraeli's "Ixion" complain. Old travellers used to relate that in Arabia Felix, the land of exquisite odours, the perpetual perfume so palled on the inhabitants, that in order to stimulate their jaded olfactories they were compelled at times to burn goats' hair, the smell of which enabled them to appreciate the scent of the herbs and blossoms of their favoured country. We English people burn goats' hair every winter, and turn with a renewed appetite to the tender beauty of spring, the ripe loveliness of summer, the matronly mellowness of autumn.

To be sure, in some years, the burning of goats' hair is a process unnecessarily prolonged, I must admit. But in spite of some drawbacks, I contend that our English seasons, which rise and set like the sun, are superior to the unvarying climates of warmer regions; as a day wherein the sun rises and sets, with all its marvellous attendant phenomena, is superior to a polar month-long sunlight.

So the summer was passing away, and the scenery about the Colony was assuming its

autumn tints. And just as some overblown rose lets fall its petals, one by one, slowly, until all are gone, so that blossom of journalism, *The Daily Cockcrow*, sent forth day by day its few last numbers, until it died, denuded of its charms.

As the final hour of the ill-fated journal drew nearer and nearer, Lancelot exerted himself to find fresh employment more and more zealously, but without effect. This time of anxiety and searching gave him fresh experiences. He inserted advertisements in *The Palladium*, and he answered advertisements which appeared in it, and looked to him as if they offered what he required. But he met with nothing but disappointment. Some of the advertisers wanted "a literary gentleman who could command a little capital," in order that he might give his money as well as his work to the floating of their speculation. Others wished to have his work without parting with their money. The only reasonable offers of employment were engagements upon provincial papers, and here he was barred by his ignorance of short-hand, which he found was a requisite in every case he met with. He sorely repented that he had not acquired a knowledge of it when he was first apprenticed to journalism, and even con-

sulted Heginbotham as to the desirability of setting to work to learn it now.

"The game would not be worth the candle—which you would have to burn at both ends," said Heginbotham; "besides, you're too good to give up to journalism what was meant for literature. The Press is a Saturn terribly given to devouring its own offspring, and poor Cybele, Literature, has a deuce of a job to save any of her babes! I hope you may be able to escape the devouring jaws that grind so many into the unrecognizable pabulum of a daily paper. You've managed to preserve your style, which newspaper work is so apt to spoil. No! don't try to learn shorthand—it would only be committing yourself yet more irrevocably; and besides, it would take you a tremendous time to acquire anything like facility."

"But what's to be done, Heg? I want work, and if journalism chooses to devour me it must, in order that I and mine may have something to devour. Seriously, I cannot hold out long against beleaguering idleness. The garrison is not overstocked with supplies."

"Oh, never fear! Relief will come, and the siege will be raised long before you come to think of eating your boots. I have had to eat mine, though, before now, and it wasn't such

very hard work when once one got used to it."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. My boots became

'Fair *pledges* of a fruitful tree.'

as Herrick quaintly puts it."

"For shame, Heg—not for eating your boots, but for putting Herrick's line to such base use as a pun. 'Sir,' said Dr. Johnson"——

"Dr. Johnson be hanged, for a consequential and wrong-headed old humbug!" retorted Heg.

"Heresy, heresy!" said Lancelot.

"Well, if you come that, Christianity was a heresy in the eyes of good temple-goers in heathen times. And old Johnson was an idol set up and worshipped by the ancients whose Tacitus was Boswell. I'm for the heresy of Christianity, as preached by the Goldsmith they all snubbed: Where is Johnson's fame beside his now? Who reads "Rasselas," and who does *not* read "The Vicar of Wakefield"?

"I plead guilty to the reading of 'The Vicar,'" Lancelot admitted, laughingly. "I won it as a prize at school, and it lies about my bedroom. I often take it up of a morning while I'm dressing, and get as absorbed over it

as if I were reading it for the first time. My wife knows my weakness, and when she finds that I have suspended my dressing, and am sitting on the sofa at the foot of the bed, she always calls out, '"The Vicar of Wakefield" again!' You have found a weak point in my armour—Oliver Goldsmith is my special love among the worthies of Literature."

"You don't make little pilgrimages to his tomb in the Temple, as I do sometimes," says Heg; "many a time have I thought off the fumes of an extra glass of whiskey there—oh, there's no desecration of his memory, my boy! One remembers his frailties—he was so human, that one doesn't mind making him a sort of *post-mortem* confidant."

"I shall have plenty of time on my hands for such pilgrimages soon!" observes Lancelot, with a sigh.

"They would do you good, if you would but think of what poor Goldsmith went through in his hard struggle. But cheer up, Oldham! There's plenty of work to be had. Come, I won't tell you what it is yet, but I'm keeping my eye on a berth for you!"

"You're a real friend!" says Oldham, shaking the other's hand.

"Heigho!" says Heginbotham — for the

scheme he refers to is one that has some drawbacks, as will be seen anon.

But Lancelot gathers courage from the old fellow's cheery words, and goes home contented.

Violet has lost no time, and has several pupils who keep the piano at the cottage going pretty continuously.

Baby, in consequence of Violet's occupation, becomes the charge of Mrs. Hassard, and the employment has a beneficial effect on the old lady. She does not flap her hands in despair as often as she used to do—possibly because she has to hold baby, and any attempt at hand-flapping under those circumstances would be fraught with peril to that august personage.

But the influence of the patience and cheerfulness of Violet and Lancelot is not lost upon her. The effect of their example is plainly perceptible. She has ceased to bewail her "better days." She feels ashamed of her querulous temper when she sees how they bear the buffetings of Fortune.

In spite of their troubles, the young couple keep up their hearts wonderfully. You see baby Letitia is indeed to them what her name implies—a joy and a happiness. Her daily doings are conned by heart, and chronicled

carefully, to be reported at length to papa when he comes home, and often enough they serve to divert his mind from unpleasant channels of thought. The mere sound of one of her crows or chuckles is sufficient to restore mamma's spirits, even when she has been wearied by long lessons and dull pupils.

Of course, in this world of compensations, it is quite out of the question that the joy the child brings to them should not at times be balanced by fears and anxieties on her account.

There were often pale faces and frightened looks at the cottage, I can tell you, whenever baby was afflicted with any of the thousand and one ailments that beset infancy. The alarms were not unfrequent, for the Colony abounded in children, and therefore naturally was seldom free from rumours of measles or whooping-cough, or something of the kind.

At such times Violet would long to fly with her beloved treasure beyond the reach of danger. Dearly as she loved her humble cottage-home, its charms were as nothing compared with baby's health and well-being. In her interests, the mother would have surrendered them all.

"Lancelot," she said, one day, under the influence of a fresh alarm of fever, "if ever we are rich again——"

"Rich again!" says Lancelot. "I don't remember ever having been blest with any other riches than you and baby."

"Well, I mean when we are independent—and that means when we are as rich as need be,—we will live somewhere where there is not a colony."

"My dear Violet," he answers, gravely, "as far as I can see, our next move is not unlikely to be to a colony less pleasant and more confined than this."

"What do you mean?" she asks, wonderingly.

"The parochial colony—the workhouse!" —and he adds, half musingly—"where they will separate us, and possibly take baby away from you."

"Don't talk so dreadfully, Lancelot!" cries the wife, snatching her baby to her bosom as if she actually saw the parish beadle coming to take it. Her face grows pale, and then flushes, and her eyes fill suddenly with tears. Lancelot repents of his words.

"I was only joking, darling," he says, smiling. But he places an arm round her, and draws her

to him as if he himself were alarmed by the vision his words had summoned up.

"Till death do us part," murmurs Violet, in a low voice, as if to herself.

"Ah, but, my darling," says Lancelot, with a smile, "the Poor Law supersedes the Prayer Book. The parish arrogates the same power as death."

"Oh, don't smile, Lancelot! It is dreadful to think of such things. Oh, my darling, we will never part," she says, looking up beseechingly in his face.

"Never, I hope, my own!" Lancelot answers, growing grave again, and clasping his wife and child closely, as if in a nameless terror.

"Never!" says Violet. And the assertion seems to give her fresh spirits, for she becomes cheerful once more, and calls upon baby to echo the "never." That, of course, is a feat beyond that young lady's powers, even in the mother's estimation, which by no means underrates the intelligence and vivacity of the child. Baby, at any rate, understands that she is being addressed, and like the lady she is, politely bubbles and babbles in reply. Thereupon, mamma declares solemnly that it sounded very like "never," but papa's credulity is not sufficiently

capacious to admit the fiction, and there is, consequently, an amicable wrangle on the subject, which ends by Violet asserting that he is envious of baby's precocious genius.

So Violet comforts herself amid her anxieties and worries with the assurance that she and Lancelot are never to part. Alas! for this poor humanity of ours, whose "nevers" only last for a few hours! In a day or two there comes a desolation upon Violet, and her heart is smitten with anguish. And what makes it the worse is that the blow is dealt by a friend's hand, seeking to do good.

About a week before *The Daily Cockcrow* utters its last expiring cock-a-doodle-doo—or, as Heginbotham calls it, "cock-a-doodle-adieu!" —but then Heginbotham must be forgiven, for he had been a comic writer at one period of his chequered career—Lancelot is smoking his pipe in the porch, when he is aware of the arrival of a visitor. It is Heginbotham, who has clearly some information to impart, though he looks troubled how to impart it.

They go in and sit down, for the evening is closing in. But Heginbotham asks them not to light the lamp yet—the twilight gloom is so nice to talk in, he says.

"Have you heard of anything to do, Old-

ham?" he asks, presently, when he has exhausted his inquiries about everything at the cottage, from baby down to the garden.

Lancelot answers that he has not heard of anything, and is tired of trying.

"That's a nuisance! By the way, have you ever been abroad?"

"Yes—you remember I went to Italy for our people in the Garibaldian days."

"To be sure! Never been beyond that, I suppose?"

"Never," says Lancelot.

"A fellow like you ought to see more of the world. Travel would be of infinite service to you. Don't you think it would, Mrs. Oldham?"

"Yes, I suppose so," says Violet, hesitatingly. She is thinking what a bore travelling would be, and how it would put baby to discomfort.

"It's all very well to talk about travelling, though," interposes Lancelot, "but as I am not the heir to a splendid property, my chance of going the grand tour is somewhat remote."

"Yes, to be sure—from *that* point of view," answers Heginbotham; "but there are other ways of travelling nowadays."

"We learnt that, when a certain friend of ours provided us with tickets for an excursion on the

Continent, when we were going on our honeymoon, did we not, Violet?"

"We did, indeed," Violet answers, with a suppressed sigh at the recollection of that happy time, when they seemed to have effected an insurance against trouble.

"Humph—ah!" says Heginbotham, disconcerted. "But I don't mean that. I mean as a matter of work. For instance, an appointment on a paper in some of our dependencies"——

"You have heard of something of the kind, Heg?" breaks in Lancelot.

"Yes, I have," the other answers, "at Denderabad, in the Bombay Presidency. The *Denderabad Sentinel* is a fine property, and the pay they offer is handsome. The duties do not include a knowledge of shorthand, your old bugbear. Such a careful fellow as you would soon make your fortune out there, and come back, if you did not prefer staying; there are chances of preferment there which are unheard of here in the old country. A few years' exile, however, would be enough to enable you to feather your nest."

"What sort of a climate is it there? Is it a healthy place, this Denderabad?"

"Well, I suppose it is as healthy as can be

expected. After all, the unhealthiness of India is overstated. Man's liability to fevers and cholera is due less to his *habitat* than to his habits."

"But how would it suit my wife and child?" asks Lancelot.

"Well, you see, my dear boy—you see," replies Heginbotham, with some hesitation, "the fact is, you know, I was thinking whether it would not be better for them to stay in England. At any rate," he adds hastily, "they might wait to see how it suited you; they could follow you out at any time."

"Oh, Mr. Heginbotham!" says Violet, as she sits in a dark corner. Her voice is full of reproach and alarm, and Heginbotham's conscience smites him. That "oh, Mr. Heginbotham!" is as pregnant with meaning as Cæsar's "Et tu, Brute!"

"Indeed I advise for the best," says Heginbotham, with an imploring look towards the darkness in which Violet is enshrouded. "It was with no great pleasure, I assure you, I contemplated proposing this, when I thought it meant depriving me of one of the few real friends I have. I meant it for the best, indeed I did, Mrs. Oldham."

Violet does not answer. She is thinking of

the other day when she and Lancelot had agreed that nothing should part them. Lancelot had said nothing now, so that his very silence terrified her. She felt that he was considering the proposition, or he would have declined it at once.

"Lancelot, I am sure, would never consent to our being separated," she says, desperately venturing on the debateable ground in the hope of bringing Lancelot to a decision.

"I don't know what to say or to think. It comes so suddenly!" says Lancelot in a hollow voice.

"There is no necessity to decide at once. The mail does not go out for some days, and my friends—it's the property of an old friend of mine, you know, this paper—will scarcely expect an answer by that even! Think it over."

"Oh, Mr. Heginbotham!" says Violet again. She cannot bear the thought of suffering the consideration of the question. She would like to have the proposal declined at once. But Lancelot has experienced so much disappointment, and laboured in vain so long, that he declares the offer must not be too hastily refused. He will take time to consider it.

Then, to Violet's horror, he and Hegin-

botham begin to discuss the matter "in case he should find it necessary to accept the appointment." They talk over the route, and the paper; and they debate about the climate, and agree that it would never do for Violet and baby to go to India.

Heginbotham does not stop late this evening. He feels that he has injured himself irreparably with Violet—so he leaves after tea, and, going up to town, tries to drown his regrets at the bottom of sundry glasses of whiskey at "The Albion."

Lancelot broods over the proposition which, little as he likes it, seems the only chance before him. Violet never breathes a word on the subject, so that he is left to his own bitter meditations. At last, in desperation, he talks of the appointment as if he had accepted it. He hopes by so doing to reconcile himself to it, in case he must take it, and to prepare Violet for the separation if it becomes necessary.

Poor Violet! it is, indeed, a sore trial for her. She is utterly miserable, for she sees it is out of the question for her baby to go, and she feels how hard will be the struggle which must end in her parting from one of her two dearest ones, whether she stays in England with her child, or goes to India with her husband.

"Lancelot," she said, one day, under the influence of a fresh alarm of fever, "if ever we are rich again——"

"Rich again!" says Lancelot. "I don't remember ever having been blest with any other riches than you and baby."

"Well, I mean when we are independent—and that means when we are as rich as need be,—we will live somewhere where there is not a colony."

"My dear Violet," he answers, gravely, "as far as I can see, our next move is not unlikely to be to a colony less pleasant and more confined than this."

"What do you mean?" she asks, wonderingly.

"The parochial colony—the workhouse!" —and he adds, half musingly—"where they will separate us, and possibly take baby away from you."

"Don't talk so dreadfully, Lancelot!" cries the wife, snatching her baby to her bosom as if she actually saw the parish beadle coming to take it. Her face grows pale, and then flushes, and her eyes fill suddenly with tears. Lancelot repents of his words.

"I was only joking, darling," he says, smiling. But he places an arm round her, and draws her

to him as if he himself were alarmed by the vision his words had summoned up.

"Till death do us part," murmurs Violet, in a low voice, as if to herself.

"Ah, but, my darling," says Lancelot, with a smile, "the Poor Law supersedes the Prayer Book. The parish arrogates the same power as death."

"Oh, don't smile, Lancelot! It is dreadful to think of such things. Oh, my darling, we will never part," she says, looking up beseechingly in his face.

"Never, I hope, my own!" Lancelot answers, growing grave again, and clasping his wife and child closely, as if in a nameless terror.

"Never!" says Violet. And the assertion seems to give her fresh spirits, for she becomes cheerful once more, and calls upon baby to echo the "never." That, of course, is a feat beyond that young lady's powers, even in the mother's estimation, which by no means underrates the intelligence and vivacity of the child. Baby, at any rate, understands that she is being addressed, and like the lady she is, politely bubbles and babbles in reply. Thereupon, mamma declares solemnly that it sounded very like "never," but papa's credulity is not sufficiently

are in the common walk of life. Bohemia had been a lovely land while she could enjoy the licence it allowed. But the gipsy nature must be strong indeed in any one to make the prospect of dying on a heap of fallen leaves under a hedge seem as desirable an ending as the hushed room, the silent friends, the calm physician, the tears, the prayers, the consolations of whispered hope, which belong to a decent death-bed. Mind, I do not say anything of the mystery beyond this world, into which the decent death-bed may be not so good a passport at times as the couch of withered leaves. I speak only of the human side of it, and as far as the prospect of dying, not of what comes after death, is concerned. The road to heaven, Sir Humphrey Gilbert truly said, is as short by sea as by land; but there is no cowardice in a man's admitting that he would rather die peaceably than sensationally—and the Lovely Leontine, whose sun of life was beginning to cast very long shadows behind her, felt a desire to go back to her native land and her own people.

It was many years since she had attended any public worship; but, her thoughts having turned to solemn things, she took up Esther's prayer-book, which lay in the top of her box,

when it chanced to be open. She opened it at its first page, and she came on the words "I will arise, and go to my father!" The long-forgotten parable came back to her memory as distinctly as only those things can do which we learnt in childhood. She knelt down and prayed that she might be spared to return to England, that she might live to be at peace with her conscience and the world.

And now, just as vessels nearing land fall in with the green branches of trees floating on the surges, or find land-birds settling in the rigging, and recognize in them the signs of their approach to port, so the little cavalcade began to meet with evidences of their return to the borders of civilization.

Among the earliest of these signs were some English newspapers; and almost at the same time came Lancelot's letter, which confirmed the story they read in those papers of Scardrake's imprisonment and trial.

The Lovely Leontine had made so much money, that she could afford to compensate the managers to whom she was now engaged, in consideration of her being allowed to retire at once. The arrangements were speedily made; and, taking a farewell—which would have been ludicrous if it had not been sincere—of the

noble charger, White Lily, she was soon on her road to England, accompanied by Esther, in whom the knowledge of her father's deadly peril had re-awakened her old love and solicitude.

Lancelot's letter had at least relieved them in one respect, in which the papers failed to convey any information. It assured them that Scardrake had escaped the extreme penalty, and that they would, therefore, find him alive, which, judging from the papers, they had feared they would never do.

The Lovely Leontine had written to Lancelot to tell him when she expected to wind up her business in the States, and by which vessel she hoped to arrive in England. Accordingly, on their arrival in port, they found him and Mr. Stimpson awaiting them: and they all proceeded together without delay to Spincaster, where Scardrake was still by special favour allowed to remain in consideration of his disturbed mental state.

Lancelot was not long in discovering the change in his aunt. Her old defiant, independent manner had left her, and she was humbled and softened. Before, it seemed to be her ambition and her pride to be solitary—to stand apart from her fellows. Even her

recognition of him, and her consideration for him, seemed to be under protest. Now she desired, it appeared to him, to gather up any stray sympathies or affinities that connected her with her fellow-creatures. Her restless energy had given place to vague longings—her love of excitement to a hunger for kindness and regard.

She told him the story of Captain Hassard's death—not without difficulty, for her emotion was no longer to be concealed by an affectation of hardness. She spoke of Mrs. Hassard with real feeling—they had both loved, and had both been deceived by the same man, and he was gone now. Rivalry there could be no longer, but they had a sort of common cause for grief. She advised Lancelot not to tell Mrs. Hassard. It would save her one more heart-ache in the world where heart-aches were plentiful enough, she said. It would be better that she should think of her husband as a fugitive who might come back again as he had done before. Better that than that she should know he was dead, and how terrible his death had been.

Lancelot took her advice, though he doubted whether the news would have so terribly distressed Mrs. Hassard, as his aunt supposed.

But Violet, to whom some time afterwards he described her father's violent end, agreed that his aunt was right, so he was satisfied that he had pursued the wisest course.

The Lovely Leontine—I call her so for the last time,—assumed her right name, Mrs. Clayter, on her return to England. She had done with the stage for ever now, and so bade farewell to all professional *aliases*. For the brief remainder of this story, if you please, we will restore her original title.

Mrs. Clayter, then, was anxious to hear all about Lancelot and his wife. She was delighted to hear of baby, and expressed great sorrow at Lancelot's loss of employment by the death of *The Cockcrow*. She at once offered him pecuniary assistance, but he said he owed her enough already, and refused to take it. She tried hard to induce him to change his mind, for his refusal pained her. She attributed it to a wrong motive, thinking he declined to receive money earned as she had earned it—an idea that never entered Lancelot's honest head. His natural independence revolted at the idea of being further indebted to one, who, he considered, had given him sufficient relief already in withdrawing from the suit she had commenced to obtain her rights as the lawful wife of Clayter.

In the meantime, there was much debating among the lawyers and doctors as to the advisability of allowing Scardrake to see Esther. He had grown more and more listless and strange of late, and the opinion of the chief medical authority was that the meeting might do good, and could do no harm, for his brain was evidently giving way. Should Esther's presence fail to rouse him and restore him to a better tone of mind, it could only accelerate (if it had any effect at all) the progress of the mental disease. He was imbecile now, and the powers would gradually weaken and be lost till he lapsed into utter mental prostration. The worst that the sight of Esther could do was to bring about at once what would otherwise be the work of a few weeks, more or less. The experiment was at least worth the trial.

The next question was how Esther would bear it. But she had no fear on that head. She inherited much of her mother's power of endurance. At any rate she declared, whatever pain it cost her, she would bear it if she thought there was the least chance of restoring her father.

Mr. Stimpson, having thus fortified himself by the opinion of the doctors and the consent of Esther, appointed a day for the trial.

He was more sanguine than the doctors, for he thought Scardrake's incessant inquiries for his daughter promised well for the experiment.

A day was fixed, and Esther, accompanied by Lancelot, visited the prison. She was very pale, but collected. As the door of the cell was opened, she hesitated for one short moment on the threshold, as if to nerve herself for the effort, and then entered.

Scardrake was seated on the edge of his bed. He looked up, a little surprised, perhaps, for no woman had visited him before; but there was no sign of recognition in his weary and listless gaze. She sat beside him and took his hand.

"Father, do you not know me—Esther, your daughter?"

"Esther, my daughter," he repeated mechanically.

There was a pause for a moment or so, during which Esther's heart sank, and Mr. Stimpson, listening outside the door, shook his head. Lancelot shook his in answer.

"Esther, my daughter," repeated Scardrake. Then he seemed to understand the meaning of the words, and turned to her quickly. She almost hoped it was a sign of returning con-

sciousness, but his first words completely disabused her of such an idea.

"When will my daughter come to see me? They told me they would send for her!"

"They have sent for her—she is here!"

He looked toward the cell door, but there was no eager light of expectation on his face. His inquiry was the unconscious parrot repetition of the last words that he had uttered while sense remained. He no longer felt the desire which had given birth to them.

"Look at me," said Esther, eagerly—earnestly. "Look at me. You know me—you must know me! Esther—your Esther!"

There came a faint, vague, shadowy recollection, or else at the mention of the name an old echo awoke.

"Herbert Elwin will dine with us to-day, so look your best. And there's all the new music. And tell her—yes, tell Esther to put on the dress he admired when he was here last."

The link was lost again. He passed from speaking to her as Esther to speaking to her of Esther. And his words stabbed her to the heart with recollection of the old days. The tears rose to her eyes.

"You are crying," he said; "she went away, and left me, too! I couldn't cry, though. Tell

her if she comes after I have left it is all for her. He will make her a good husband, I am sure."

Esther could endure no longer. She burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping, and flung herself on his neck, calling on him in an imploring voice and with cries of anguish.

"My good woman," he said, with a sudden change in his manner, "it is of no use your making this noise in the office. I tell you if he doesn't pay, he shall go to prison. He shall go to prison, and rot there if he doesn't pay me every penny, principal and interest. Go away—go away!"

He thrust her from him roughly, and Lancelot entering was just in time to catch her in his arms. She was fainting.

"This is useless torture to her," he said to Stimpson, who had followed him into the cell, "and of no earthly good to him."

"I fear not," said Stimpson, despondingly.

They called in the doctor, who had also been in waiting outside.

"Hopeless!" was his verdict, "there seemed some chance of a gradual awakening while he spoke about her, but when her passionate entreaties had no other effect than to bring back recollections of his old money-lending days, I saw it was quite hopeless."

All this was spoken out before the old man, but he took no notice of it. He sat chuckling and rubbing his hands, as if he enjoyed the effect his threats had had upon Esther, whom he supposed to be the wife or sister of some victim of his usury.

They left him, and felt that they must abandon all hope of his cure. They escorted Esther to the hotel where she and Mrs. Clayter were staying, and left the latter to administer what comfort she could to her daughter. Stimpson and Lancelot had business to talk over. The former had suggested that it would be well to try and recover Scardrake's property for Esther. Of course it was all forfeited to the crown, as Stimpson told Lancelot, on Scardrake's conviction; but he believed, on a representation of the case in the proper quarter, it would be resettled on his daughter.

Lancelot and Stimpson agreed that it would not be well to raise expectations that might not be realized, so they merely begged Mrs. Clayter to remove Esther to London, as her longer stay at Spincaster could be productive of no good, and might have a most injurious effect on her health. Mrs. Clayter took the hint at once, and started for London the next day. Lancelot and the lawyer followed her,

and set diligently to work to obtain the reversal of the forfeiture.

It was a long and tedious business, and one that had to be very delicately conducted. Lancelot's former connection with the press stood him in great stead, for it obtained him audiences with people of influence.

The Cockcrow had been dead a considerable time, so that he had only too much time on his hands to devote to the task he had set before him. Of course, all this time he had been unable to take any steps in his own affairs, and the question of the *Denderabad Sentinel* was still in abeyance.

At last success crowned their efforts, and he and Stimpson were able to convey to Esther the welcome information that she was not to lose her father's property. She was very grateful to him, and to Stimpson also. The latter, of course, as her father's legal adviser, she was able to reward handsomely for his efforts. But she did not know how to show her gratitude to Lancelot. She consulted her mother in what way it could be done, so delicately as not to wound Lancelot's feelings.

"I owe him a debt of gratitude, too, dear," said Mrs. Clayter, "but he is very proud and independent, and I don't know how to pay it.

But we will think the matter over, and if we cannot manage it somehow between us it will be hard."

What with Mrs. Clayter's savings and Esther's property, they had riches enough and to spare now. But they felt it would be an insult to offer to pay Lancelot. However, at last, chance indicated the way. Stimpson had been appointed Esther's agent, and he set himself about discovering the extent of old Scardrake's property, and sent the details to Esther, who showed his memorandum to her mother.

In the meantime Lancelot, having accomplished his self-imposed task of assisting to get back Esther's property for her, found himself without work, and felt that now or never he must make up his mind about the Indian appointment.

He talked it over with Violet, who came at last to see that she must submit to parting with him for some years. They would not be justified, she felt, in refusing to accept such an opportunity. But it almost broke her heart to think of their being separated.

Having arrived thus far, Lancelot saw it was useless to put off the evil day any longer, so he wrote to old Heg, and asked him to come down

on the next Wednesday to arrange the matter finally, as the mail would go out that day. And then by tacit consent neither Lancelot nor Violet said anything more, but waited with sad hearts for the black Wednesday.

The black Wednesday came, but no Heginbotham. The next morning came a note written in a shaky hand to say that circumstances had arisen at the last moment to prevent his coming to the Colony as he had intended. Lancelot knew what that meant!

The fact was that old Heg had fallen in with some of his old *collaborateurs* on *The Cockcrow*, and had been enticed into an orgie. There was some excuse for him, for he looked forward to his interview with Lancelot almost as unwillingly as Lancelot himself did, for he knew it meant a sentence of expatriation against his friend. Moreover, he felt that Violet would never look as kindly on him again as she used, although he had done all for the good of her and her husband.

Lancelot could not help feeling that Heginbotham had reprieved him only, not freed him. But he was grateful for the respite, and so was Violet.

It was just about this time that Stimpson sent Esther an inventory of her property, which she went over with her mother. As they read

it over, suddenly Mrs. Clayter clapped her hands for joy.

"Oh, Esther! the very plan to recompense Lancelot. Here it is."

Esther was delighted, and they talked the plan over, and suggested one way of carrying it out after another, but were unable to decide on any. Mrs. Clayter suggested that Stimpson should be called into the council, so Esther wrote and asked him to come and see them, which he did readily enough on learning that the matter he was asked to advise upon was one that was likely to benefit Lancelot. When the case was laid before him he at once suggested the right course to adopt, and so Esther decided to place it in his hands to carry it out.

And now, it having been officially declared that his insanity was a matter past all doubt, Scardrake was removed from the gaol to the asylum. It may be terrible to think of being deprived of one's senses, but in this case I seem to see mercy rather than punishment. For, as he wanders about the grounds of the asylum looking for his daughter, or offering to discount bills for the other lunatics, he is pursued by no remorse, haunted by no fear, vexed by no expectations. He simply vegetates — he no longer lives.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH LANCELOT SIGHTS THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

THE steaming stillness of an early autumn day has settled on the Colony. Nature has uttered the "hush!" which speaks in the first fallen leaves, that carpet the walks and dull the dry crackle of the gravel underfoot, so that from the sound—if from no other cause—a blind man could tell it was autumn.

Not that there was no weird music at times in gusty corners—by which I mean corners where, if it could speak its mind anywhere at all, a wind, however feeble and uncertain, was helped to speech by angles and turns. In such loquacious spots, even on a still day like this, a few rattling, rustling dry leaves would now and then set up a song and a dance, as terrible in its way as the dance Mr. Thornbury describes as taking place around the plague-pit in the days of the great pestilence in London.

They caper and croon for awhile, and then a passing foot crushes them into the ground.

The sky is a dull morose colour, so that the fast-thinning boughs of the trees are not made so very staringly apparent as they would be if they stood out distinct against a clear blue. But the neutral tint overhead is caught up and repeated all around. The surface of Nature's universal mirrors, the ponds and pools, is dim and lustreless, of course. But even the sheeny blades of grass, with the reflective power which makes one wonder on a windless summer day how so much of Heaven seems to have fallen on earth, there is such a mingling of cerulean blue with the green of the meadows—even those sheeny blades now catch the grey of the sky, and spread a sort of mist over the fields.

It is one of those days, in short, which say sternly and distinctly that autumn is here.

Who has not begun by loving autumn best of all the seasons, for its mystical fading splendours, the riches of colour and glory that spring knows nothing of? But who retains the love late in life? We come at last to understand the beauty to be that of the hectic flush on a dear cheek, and we tremble as the summer dies away into the changing loveliness of the fall;

for to how many of our cherished ones does not that mean but too often the sentence of banishment for the winter to warmer climates, which, with all the orange bloom and violets of their Christmas, are not home, and whence, alas! not seldom those dear ones fail to return. Since I wrote jestingly, a few chapters ago, of the meaning of the Latin phrase *abire ad plures*, I have had sore reason to learn its deeper signification, and how, as time passes, so many have gone before, that in our selfishness we are almost tempted tenderly to reproach a dead friend with betraying our love, by "going over to the majority." But there is comfort in the knowledge that each day we press nearer to the goal they have won.

It is this that makes spring dear to us as we advance in life. It may be because it seems to us a type of the rising again, without which every death of a beloved friend would be a living death to us. No! We part in autumn —winter is the sleep—and in spring we meet once more.

The sense of farewell and parting belonging to the season had fallen on Lancelot and Violet as they stood side by side at the door of their humble home, looking upon the waste and wane around them. Since the day of Hegin-

botham's failure, they had not spoken of their approaching separation. But it had come to be a vague presence in their talk, never described, always understood. Violet would speak of some very future contingency as something to happen when "it" was over—including in that brief word a long history of grief and loneliness. Lancelot would say she was to do something "by and by,"—meaning, by that indistinct date, the coming time of bitterness and banishment.

The autumn twilight was closing in. Mrs. Hassard was indulging in her accustomed after-dinner nap. The troubles of other people did not worry that old lady. As a girl, she had wasted on sentiment the moral fibre which should have built up sensibility. She was not troubled that Lancelot and Violet should part—may even have had a sort of mild belief that it would be good for them, and accordingly never allowed a consideration of the matter to prevent her from taking her forty winks.

Baby was sound asleep, too, for she was too young, as Mrs. Hassard was too old, to be disturbed by cares that were not selfish. Violet, as she stood by her husband, was on the alert for the slightest sound from her child's room—her love and attention, as usual, divided

between her two dearest treasures—as her heart would be torn in twain presently, that one half might stay with the baby, and the other go with Lancelot over the sea.

As the twilight closed in, they became aware of a figure approaching, which, as it drew nearer, was plainly discerned to be that of Heginbotham. He came to them with a certain shyness and awkwardness. But Violet's greeting reassured him, and he gave Lancelot an expressive and apologetic grip of the hand as he explained how "some fellows had interfered to prevent his coming down, as had been agreed."

"Don't say a word!" says Lancelot. "Shall we go in? It is getting dark and chilly now, and you had certainly better go in, Violet."

So they turn indoors, where Violet proposed to light the lamp, for it is quite dusk in the room. But Heginbotham, scarcely restored to comfort yet, begs that she will not do so. It is pleasanter to talk—easier, perhaps—in the gathering gloom, only lit up occasionally as Heg pulls at his cigar, or Lancelot at the pipe which he has produced to keep his friend company.

There is silence for a while, for no one seems to know how to break it, feeling how sad the talk will be when it begins. But Violet steals

to the piano, and softly—tentatively, as it were, as if she were not sure of the notes in the dark—she plays the melody of "Sweet Home."

"Well, Heg," says Lancelot suddenly, in a husky voice, like a man plunging into cold water, "I have made up my mind. If the post is still vacant, I will accept it."

"It's vacant still."

"Then I am your man, Heg!"

The music grows very faint and tremulous now.

"I will write," says Heg, "by the next mail and tell them so. Of course, you will have travelling expenses. Shall I also ask for an advance of some quarter's salary or so?"

"I think I had better not," says Lancelot. But Heginbotham sees that he would like to have it, though he has natural scruples about asking for it.

"As for that, Lancelot," he continues, "I didn't ask whether *you* had better ask, but *I!* Remember, I am not writing on your account, but theirs. They want a man"——

"And a man wants the place."

"May be! But they don't know that—don't suspect it; for they believe they will have great difficulty in securing the kind of man they require. I am obliging them, don't you see?

And the more I make stipulations the greater they will consider the difficulty—and the more they will be obliged to me for overcoming it."

"Heg, you're a dear old boy! The money will be useful, for goodness knows how I could leave Violet as unprovided-for as she would otherwise be."

"Violet," says a low voice from the piano, "has no fear on that account, and would be quite able to see after Baby and herself."

"But her husband would prefer that she should not be compelled to do so—and very right too," observes Heginbotham.

"And—and when," asks Lancelot, hesitatingly—"and when must I hold myself in readiness?"

"There's the mail out, and the mail back with their letter. After that, of course they will be only too glad to get you without delay."

"Is it a *very* long journey?" asks Violet; whereupon Heginbotham, only too glad of a diversion, plunges at once into a description of the *route*, and all its strange sights and experiences. I fear he draws somewhat on his imagination for his facts, but he rattles on with a sort of feverish excitement. He knows that now, when the die is cast, and Lancelot has spoken, there will be a silence so soon as he ceases to speak.

But even Heg's description of the Overland Route and its marvels cannot last for ever. As his voice dies out, the stillness he anticipates falls upon them, and the darkness seems to grow denser.

At this moment there are footsteps outside on the gravel, and a knock at the door. The little servant, who has abandoned her florid style of singing since Baby began to toddle, is heard answering the summons, and presently she comes in to say "a gentleman have called, and wishes to see master partickler."

"Show him into the other room," says Lancelot. Then as he rises to go, he asks, "Good news or bad?"

"Good!" answer both Violet and Heginbotham; but they do so rather to encourage Lancelot, than from any belief that the visitor really is the bearer of pleasant tidings.

Lancelot found the visitor waiting for him in the little room he used as a working-room.

"I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Lancelot Oldham?" asked the stranger.

"That is my name."

"Mine, sir, is Collinson, of the firm of Collinson and Malam, advertising and general agents."

"I am well acquainted with your firm," said

Lancelot, with a sudden faintness of joy, for he saw that the call "meant business."

"You were at one time editor of *The Obelisk*, I believe?" continued the other.

"I was for several months"——

"During which time that magazine achieved a larger circulation than it had reached for some time before, or has touched since."

"I have known nothing of its sale since. It certainly increased considerably while I knew anything about its working."

"Well, sir, we have had the matter placed in our hands by the present proprietor, who is anxious to throw fresh capital into it, and endeavour to bring it up to the old mark again. Since the time you mention it has been going down steadily—from causes not very difficult for men of business like you and me to discover."

"Want of funds and the publication of gratuitous contributions," said Lancelot.

"That is just about it, sir. It's an article of faith with Collinson and Malam that the less a periodical costs for production the smaller will its sale become—seems to prove that what isn't worth buying is seldom worth selling, doesn't it, sir?"

"I think so:—or that people, whose manu-

scripts represent to them so little labour that they can afford to give them away, form a correct estimate of the value of their works, and that the public unfortunately agree with them in their valuation."

"Well, sir," says Mr. Collinson, nodding his head in approval of Lancelot's remarks, "I have come to see you on business, and must not occupy your time, which is no doubt valuable. The proprietor of *The Obelisk*, as I have said, is about to inaugurate a new policy with regard to the magazine. We have undertaken the advertising department on terms which will enable us to do the periodical justice. New offices have been taken for it in the Strand, and the printing is to be done by one of the best establishments in the trade. All that is required is an efficient editor, and I have been deputed to ask if you will undertake the post."

"With great pleasure," says Lancelot, scarcely able to conceal his joy, despite his efforts to avoid any impolitic display of emotion.

"I think the terms will suit you," continues the other; "I am empowered to offer you five hundred a year, with a third of all profits after the magazine reaches a certain circulation, to

be fixed upon by future arrangement between yourself and the proprietor. You will also be consulted as to the rate of pay—and by the way, I suppose, I need hardly say that your contributions will be paid for. What do you say, sir?"

"That the terms seem to me very liberal, and that my services are at the proprietor's disposal."

"I should also tell you that there is to be a sub-editor at a couple of hundred a year, and that his appointment is left to you by the proprietor, who is, between ourselves, too inexperienced in literary affairs to know what is required of a sub-editor, and has complete confidence in you."

"I understand," says Lancelot, with difficulty keeping down a smile at the back-handed compliment so unconsciously paid him by the other.

"That's all arranged and settled, then, so far. And now we come to another point. We are anxious to begin the new series with the next number—this is the beginning of the month, and there is no time to be lost. Will you undertake to begin the duties at once? We—I mean Collinson and Malam—are prepared to give you any guarantee you may wish

that the agreement, &c., shall be all carried out on the terms I have named, and your first year's salary will be paid-in to-morrow to your name. You see time is precious, Mr. Oldham, and if we have to wait for the drawing-up of agreements and the discussion of details, we shall lose the beginning of the month, and not get to press in time. There is no wish to bind you at all—in fact, the five hundred is to be forfeited to you if you and the proprietor cannot come to an understanding on the details."

"I was not hesitating on that account," said Lancelot. "The guarantee of your word is sufficient with any one who knows your firm. But I was doubtful whether I could get together a creditable first number at so short a notice."

"No fear of that, sir! First numbers are never good numbers; and it's my belief, sir, that that arises from the fact that they're not got up at high pressure. The longer the preparation the smaller the success, I have always noticed. Come—say 'Yes,' Mr. Oldham."

"I will do my best."

"Very good, sir! Many thanks. I will give full instructions to the printers to receive copy from you, and to take your orders as to

any alterations or arrangements you may think fit to make. In short, sir, as the proprietor desired me to tell you—you are to act as if the magazine were your own in all respects, except paying for it."

"May I ask the proprietor's name?"

"Well, we are not at liberty to mention it, unless you especially insist. The proprietor has private reasons—family reasons only—for wishing to keep it a secret for the present. You can look to us, sir, as the guarantee that all is straightforward and right."

"It was mere idle curiosity that prompted me to ask—stimulated possibly by an admiration for a proprietor who acts so generously and with such liberality."

"And now," says Mr. Collinson, rising, "I must bid you good-night. I ought to apologize for coming at such an unreasonable hour; but I live at Bromley, and intended to stop on my way home, hoping to leave town earlier, but I was quite unexpectedly detained. I thought, however, that the importance of every hour, with so little time before us, would be sufficient excuse."

"Don't say a word about it," says Lancelot. "I am greatly obliged to you for calling."

Lancelot bids Mr. Collinson good-night, and

sees him to the door, and then rushes into the room where Violet and Heginbotham are sitting, with Mrs. Hassard, who, the lamp having been lighted in the interim, is reclining on the sofa, blinking feebly like an owl overtaken by the daylight.

Lancelot executes a sort of double shuffle in his delight.

"I've got an engagement!" he says.

"As champion-belt-dancer at a music hall?" says Heginbotham, astonished at such an unusual performance; for Lancelot was rather staid and grave, as a rule.

"Get out, you precious old humbug," Lancelot answers, clapping him on the shoulder—"as editor!"

Violet clasps her hands and cries, "Oh!" Heginbotham says, "Editor of what?"

"Of our old friend *The Obelisk*, old boy! It has passed into the hands of a new proprietor, who is doing everything in the right way, and offers me splendid terms. Five hundred a year, and a third of the profits after a certain number!"

"I'm very glad to hear it!" says Heginbotham, warmly pressing Lancelot's hand.

"You don't happen to know of any one who would submit to the nuisance of having to

work with *me*, in consideration of a sub-editorial salary of two hundred a year?" asks Lancelot, with meaning.

"Well, if you won't come to me for a testimonial for him, stating him to be sober, moral, and industrious, I *do* know a party," says Heg, laughing.

"I know some one," says Violet, "whom I *can* bear testimony for, so I shall expect you to give the preference to my candidate, Mr. Editor. I will answer for his doing his work admirably, and with enthusiasm—he will do it *con amore*, I'll guarantee."

"I'm very sorry, Heg," remarks Lancelot; "but I am afraid I must hand the appointment over to Violet's nominee. His name madam?"

"His name is Heginbotham," says Violet.

"The very fellow I was thinking of!" cries Heg laughingly; "but you don't know him so well as I do, Mrs. Oldham, or you would not think so highly of him."

"I know him better than he knows himself," answers Violet, gently.

"Thank you!" says Heginbotham, touched by her kindness. He shakes both his friends warmly by the hand, and congratulating Lancelot, says he will do his work as if it were a labour of love for such an editor.

"We must begin our duties at once, Heg, for we have to bring out the next number as our first. I have full liberty to do exactly what I like in the way of altering and improving the magazine."

"We'll have a new and picturesque wrapper, then, first of all," says Heginbotham. "There's nothing like that, in my idea."

"And an improvement in the illustrations," says Lancelot.

"There was plenty of room for that in the last number I saw of it," remarks Heg, "and then there's the leading story"——

"If you please," breaks in Violet, rising at these words, and going to a drawer, whence she produces a bundle of manuscript—"if you please, I wish to submit a novel to the Editor!"

"My novel!" says Lancelot. "I never expected that to come in useful."

"I told you it would," observes Violet, with pride: "I knew it would."

"It is lucky, upon my word, with such a rush to get the number out," remarks Heg.

The rest of the evening is spent in talking over plans for the magazine. Then there is a quiet little supper, and after that Heginbotham insists on displaying his skill as a brewer of punch, in order that they may drink success

to the new editor and his magazine. So the punch is brewed, and the toast is duly honoured —even Mrs. Hassard becoming enthusiastic over it. Presently, as she begins to nod again, she is ordered off to bed, and then the three friends fall-to again discussing their plans for the magazine, and time slips away unnoticed, until Lancelot, filling his pipe, sees Violet struggling to repress a yawn. He looks at his watch and finds it is past three! So old Heg must make himself comfortable on the sofa, which he says is a far better bed than he gets every night.

Pleasant dreams," says Heg, as he and Lancelot shake hands. "Good night, Mrs. Oldham. Break the news of my appointment very gently to my little sweetheart"—for Heg is the accepted suitor of baby—"and tell her she must make haste and grow up, for I am quite wealthy enough—not to say old enough to marry now! Good night!"

"Good night!"

There are pleasant dreams in the little cottage that night. Next morning Lancelot and Heginbotham go to town by an early train, and enter upon their labours. Mr. Collinson is already at work, and comes in presently with large posters, announcing the new series of

The Obelisk, "edited by Lancelot Oldham." Heg undertakes to see to the alterations, upon which he and Lancelot have settled, as regards the appearance of the magazine, and all other details at the printing office. Lancelot charters a Hansom, and beats up the various writers whom he wishes to join the staff.

Everybody works hard, and by five o'clock, when they meet at the office just before it closes, all three report admirable progress. Mr. Collinson insists on their dining with him, and having a bottle of champagne to celebrate the launch; so they have a snug dinner in a private room at one of those quaint old taverns, which have seen so many generations of writers, and of which Poets Laureate even have not disdained to sing.

But the feast is not kept up too long, for all three are pretty well tired with their day's work, and glad enough to break up early and go home.

Mr. Collinson has insisted on banking Lancelot's five hundred pounds, and Lancelot experiences the pleasant sensation derived from the possession of a brand-new cheque-book. Talk about money burning a hole in one's pocket—is there anything to compare with the virgin cheque-book, that represents a nice

round sum at the bank, to tempt a man into an immediate expenditure? Lancelot does not try to struggle against the temptation. The first thing he does is to draw a cheque, and buy a pretty little watch and chain for his wife.

He finds her waiting anxiously for his return when he reaches home.

"Oh, Lancelot," she exclaims, on seeing the present, "what a lovely little watch! But you shouldn't have spent so much money on me!"

"I am a rich man now," said he, laughing.

"Yes, quite rich at last!" says Violet, as solemnly as if they had suddenly come into an immense fortune.

"And yet no richer than I was before?"

"What do you mean?" she asks.

"My darling," says Lancelot, drawing her to his heart, "could I ever be poor while I had health to work, and while I had my two treasures—you and our child."

"Thank heaven our anxieties are over—and that we shall not have to part now as I feared, when I thought you were going to India! I am so grateful to think that trial has been spared me."

Lancelot does not speak, but clasps her

more closely, as the recollection that they had so nearly been obliged to part comes back to him.

"I don't know how I could have borne the separation," continues Violet—"we have been so happy, even in our poorest days."

"We have indeed! 'Poor and content is rich—and rich enough,' my own wife!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH LANCELOT IS LEFT AT WORK.

THE month passes rapidly by. Lancelot and Heginbotham work hard, and are ably supported. The number is ready, and the day of publication arrives. The earliest copy of the new series of *The Obelisk*, as of the first number that Lancelot edited, goes to Violet, who is delighted with it. To be sure, she is not a thoroughly disinterested critic, but other critics who receive early copies speak highly of it;—in fact, the papers are unanimous in praising it as one of the best first numbers ever printed. Orders come in so fast that Mr. Collinson has to print a second edition in order to keep up the supply. The circulation goes up at a bound.

A few days after the magazine comes out, Lancelot, having been able to get ahead with the second number while the first was going

to press, has leisure to ask Mr. Collinson when he and the proprietor are to meet.

"Whenever you please," says Mr. Collinson; "but if it is merely with regard to the agreement, I have had that prepared some time—in fact, it was drawn up before we knew what the sale was likely to be; and if you have no objection to its provisions, I have to inform you that the circulation has already passed the point named in the document, and, therefore, that a third of the profits is yours."

Lancelot says he does not like to take advantage of this, but the other declares that it is the wish of the proprietor that he should; and he produces the paper for signature.

Then Lancelot discovers, what I suppose the reader has guessed already—that the agreement is between "Lancelot Oldham on the one hand," and "Esther Scardrake on the other hand."

At first he does not quite like the notion of this, but Heginbotham points out that it is a mere business transaction, and that Lancelot has made Esther's property a paying speculation, instead of a worthless, if not losing, concern. Lancelot sees the truth of this and is satisfied, but he writes to thank Esther and his aunt; for he learns through Stimpson, to

whom Mr. Collinson refers him, how the two had conspired to benefit him.

* * * * *

There is little more for me to tell. Nobody, I fear, will care enough about Bertrand Metford to ask what has become of him, and therefore my readers will not be interested to learn that, after assuming all sorts of airs and graces at Calcutta, he was found out, as all such rogues are, sooner or later. He had to quit Calcutta, which, after this *exposé*, grew too hot for him, in spite of all the punkahs and other appliances specially adapted for the use of Europeans. He went up country, and it was reported became the favourite of an old Begum, with whom he contrived to pass himself off as a distinguished English nobleman. He obtained such influence over her, and availed himself of it so freely in order to enrich herself out of her treasury, that the chances are he would have returned to England a wealthy man before long, had not an envious courtier poisoned him. This, I say, was reported: another story says that he was seen begging at one of the military stations by an officer who had known him in his fine times, when he went into society. It is

hard to tell which story to believe, but it is fair to take it for granted he came to no good, for he had had far more than his share of luck, even for such a rogue as he was.

His partner—far less culpable—is scarcely more fortunate, for he was almost ruined by the great drought in Australia, which swept off nearly all his stock.

As for old Moss, crafty as he was, he got caught at last. Whether continued success gave him too much confidence, or increasing age dulled his acute mind, I cannot say, but he came to the determination of retiring from business, for fear he should be struck off the rolls. Mogridge succeeded to his former master and recent partner, and does very well; though owing to his being a little too scrupulous to step into the shoes of old Moss, the business is not so brisk as it was.

Mr. Hegan has retired, too—but to Highgate Cemetery! Peace to the ashes of an honest, kind-hearted old gentleman.

* * * * * * *

You would never guess that that silver-haired old lady is the once Lovely Leontine! Time has dealt gently with her, and those snows

have fallen lightly enough. A peaceful old age, after a life of trouble, anxiety, sin, and suffering, lies between her and the not far distant land of shadows.

She has but one trouble. Esther, as her nature grew more tender, her heart more soft, became the prey of a bitter remorse. There is constantly before her eyes the terrible picture of a woman's pale face—the face of Laura Clayter. Revenge may be sweet—it is an intoxicating cup to drain, but bitter indeed are the dregs! A serpent lies at the bottom—the never-dying worm whose bite is as sharp as that of "the worm of Nile." The tears of penitence are the only relief for a heart gnawed by those venomous fangs:—and sorely does Esther repent, clinging to the hope that repentance so deep and so sincere may win her pardon at the last.

* * * * * * *

One more peep at Lancelot and Violet, and then we will ring down the curtain.

They have moved to a house which, though not large, is a mansion in comparison with the little cottage in the Colony. As Lancelot is not called to town every day, and is not under

the necessity of staying there till late, as in the old *Cockcrow* days, they have been able to get further afield, and have chosen the neighbourhood of Shirley for their abode. The fresh breezes have brought health and strength to Baby, and to Baby's mother. Miss Heginbotham, who never seems to grow older, lives close by, and old Heg has been persuaded to tear himself from his old habits and his old lodgings, and is quite a respectable old boy. He declares he feels a regular country gentleman. He has had a rise in salary lately, which enables him to abandon his old journalistic work. For *The Obelisk* is a complete success, and all concerned in it share its prosperity.

But you must not imagine because I tell you that all concerned in it share its prosperity, that I mean you to think the curtain goes down upon my people retiring into idleness. Not a bit of it! The magazine is made a success by continuous attention and incessant labour. There is anxiety, too; and vigilance and care are necessary to maintain it at the point of success it has attained. And if it were not so, I doubt if I could honestly call the book which is closed by this chapter "Content!" Idleness is not Content—for idleness knows no repose. Work honestly done, duties conscien-

tiously performed, these alone bring the repose to which they give such zest—these give the freshness of enjoyment to a rare holiday now and then—these bring, in short, all the calm pleasures which constitute that most ineffable of blessings—Content!

THE END.

WYMAN AND SONS, PRINTERS, GREAT QUEEN STREET, LONDON, W.C.